NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 08254559 5

Digitized by Microsoft®

Asbury
Smith
A N

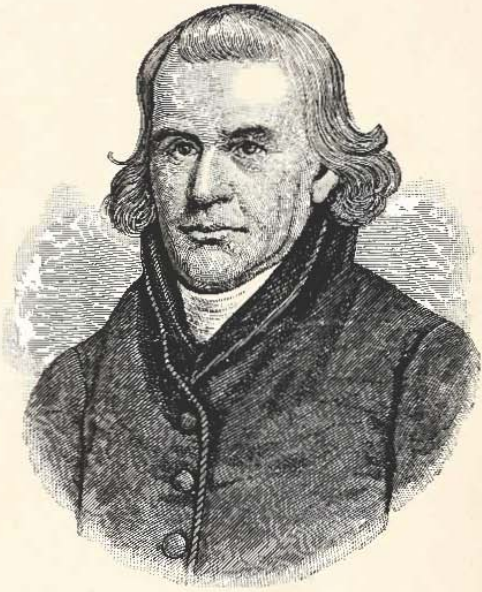
Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized for Microsoft Corporation
by the Internet Archive in 2007.
From New York Public Library.
May be used for non-commercial, personal, research,
or educational purposes, or any fair use.
May not be indexed in a commercial service.



FRANCIS ASBURY.

Digitized by Microsoft®

LIFE AND LABORS

OF

FRANCIS ASBURY,

BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN AMERICA.

BY

GEORGE G. SMITH, D.D.,

Author of "Life and Letters of James O. Andrew," "Life and Times of George F. Pierce," "History of Methodism in Georgia," etc.

NASHVILLE, TENN.:
PUBLISHING HOUSE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH,
BARBEE & SMITH, AGENTS.
1896.

Digitized by Microsoft®

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
368747A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1928 L

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1896,
BY GEORGE G. SMITH,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Dedication.

To John Christian Keener, D.D.,

Senior Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,

This Book Is Dedicated:

not only because of the high respect I have for his office
and my lofty admiration for his mental gifts
and moral excellences,
but as a token of the tender love I feel for one who for long
years I have called my friend.

GEORGE G. SMITH.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

PREFACE.

Soon after the death of Bishop Asbury measures were put on foot to have a full biography of him prepared. Dr. S. K. Jennings, at that time one of the most scholarly men of the Church, was selected to do the work. After a considerable lapse of time, he returned the material placed in his hands and declined to go any farther. In the meantime the journals of Bishop Asbury were published; and as they partly served the purpose of a memoir, none was prepared. Then the history of Dr. Bangs and the more extensive work of Dr. Abel Stevens gave a full account of his labors; and over forty years ago the Rev. Dr. Strickland sent to press "The Pioneer Bishop," which was a biography of Bishop Asbury. The Rev. Dr. Janes made selections from his journals, and thus prepared also a memoir in Asbury's own words.

It has seemed to me, however, that a new life was demanded, and I have written it. I have relied very largely on his journals, but have by no means confined myself to them. I have freely availed myself of the labors of those who have gone before me. I do not think I have allowed any available source of information to be neglected. I do not think a biographer is an historian in a general sense, and think that, however one may be tempted to turn aside from the direct line his work marks out, he should resist the temptation, and so I have confined myself as strictly as I could to the part which Asbury himself acted in the history of the Church. Nor do I think a biographer is an advocate or

Digitized by Microsoft®

an apologist. It is his business to tell what the subject of his writing was, and what he did, and leave others to form conclusions for themselves. There are always matters in which the biographer and the subject of his writing are not fully agreed, and things of whose non-existence he would have been glad; but above all else, he must be honest and conceal nothing. There are few things in Asbury's life which ask for defense, and none which ask for concealment. He was so closely connected with the beginnings of things in the Methodism in America that the story of his life is largely the story of early Methodism, and I have traced his journeys and given an account of his personal connection with men and places with a particularity which may sometimes seem monotonous.

I do not think Asbury has had the place he is entitled to in the history of the nation or of the Church. To no one man was America more indebted than to him.

I have not given my authority for statements in many cases. Those familiar with his journal will see how closely and how freely I have used it. I have studied, but I found it difficult, if not impossible, to point out the page on which the statement was found in many cases. Where I could give my author, I have done so.

I think this book is needed, and I hope it will do good.

GEORGE G. SMITH.

Macon (Vineville), Ga.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

1745–1771.

PAGE

Asbury's Birth—Family of Joseph Asbury—Childhood—Conversion—Apprenticeship—The Local Preacher—On a Circuit—The Missionary 1

CHAPTER II.

1771–1772.

The Young Missionary—Passage from Bristol—Incidents of the Voyage—Arrives at Philadelphia—Goes to New York—View of New York in 1771—Journey to Maryland 6

CHAPTER III.

1772.

Journey to Maryland—Bohemia Manor—Strawbridge—Frederick County—View of Maryland—Asbury's First Round—Goes to Baltimore—View of Baltimore—Into Kent County—Conflict with the Parson—Sickness..... 14

CHAPTER IV.

1773–1774.

Asbury in Maryland Again—Goes to New York—To Philadelphia—Mr. Rankin's Arrival—The First General Conference—Maryland Once More 26

CHAPTER V.

1774.

Mr. Asbury in New York and Baltimore—New York Again—Discouragements—Mr. Rankin and Mr. Asbury—Richard Wright Goes Home—Asbury's Discipline—Religious Experience—Feebleness of Body—Goes Southward—Maryland Again..... 34

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

1775.

PAGE

Asbury's First Work in Virginia—Norfolk—Portsmouth—Isaac Luke—County Work—Brunswick Circuit..... 42

CHAPTER VII.

1776.

The War Time—Mr. Wesley's Mistake—Asbury's View—Asbury Sick—Berkley Bath—Preaching—Conference at Deer Creek—Discussion on the Sacraments—Trouble with Mr. Rankin—Asbury left Out of the Minutes—Goes to Annapolis—Test Oath—Retires into Delaware.. 47

CHAPTER VIII.

1778.

Life in Delaware—Thomas White—Asbury's Studies—Stormy Times—The Conference at Leesburg—Asbury's Called Conference—Troubles in the Conferences—Asbury's Hard Condition—A Truce Made..... 53

CHAPTER IX.

1781–1783.

General Assistant—Conference in Baltimore—Settlement of Troubles—Through the Valley of Virginia—Allusion to Strawbridge—Through Eastern Virginia—First Visit to North Carolina—His Friends Among the Episcopal Clergy—Visits New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey—Barratt's Chapel, 1784—Letter from Asbury to Shadford..... 60

CHAPTER X.

1784.

Dr. Coke—Mr. Wesley's Will—Mr. Asbury Refuses to be Ordained Till a Conference is Called—The Conference Meets—Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke Elected Bishops and Called Superintendents..... 72

CHAPTER XI.

1784.

Mr. Asbury's Views on Episcopacy..... 77

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XII.

PAGE

Thomas Coke — The Welsh Gentleman — In Oxford — Coke's Curacy—His Conversion—Mr. Wesley's Favor—His Labors—His Death 81

CHAPTER XIII.

1785.

The New Bishop—Tour Southward—Henry Willis—Jesse Lee—Visits Charleston, S. C.—Edgar Wells—Journey Northward—Cokesbury College—Visit to Mount Vernon—Corner Stone of College Laid 89

CHAPTER XIV.

1786.

Asbury's Second Episcopal Tour — Hanover, Virginia — North Carolina — Sinclair Capers — Charleston - Hope Hull—John Dickins and the Revised Discipline—Central North Carolina — The Baltimore Conference — The Valley of Virginia—Religious Experience at Bath—Return Southward 96

CHAPTER XV.

1787.

The Tour of the Two Bishops—Dr. Coke Again—The Blue Meetinghouse in Charleston—Prosperity of the Work in South Carolina and Georgia—Central South Carolina—Journey Northward—Virginia Conference—Baltimore Conference—Dr. Coke in Trouble—The New Discipline—Mr. Wesley's Displeasure—Effort to Appoint a Bishop—Failure 101

CHAPTER XVI.

1788.

Charleston Again—Riot—Georgia—Holston—Greenbrier—Conference at Uniontown, Pa.—College Troubles 107

CHAPTER XVII.

1789.

Mr. Wesley's Famous Letter and the Council—Georgia—Daniel Grant—Wesley and Whitefield School—Mr. Wesley's Letter—North Carolina—The Council 116

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVIII.

1790.

PAGE

Over the Continent—North Carolina—Charleston—Georgia—Western North Carolina—Over the Mountains—General Russell's—Kentucky—Virginia—Pennsylvania Cokesbury 124

CHAPTER XIX.

1791.

Arminian Magazine—Coke's Arrival in Charleston—William Hammett—Georgia Conference—Virginia—Wesley's Death—Coke's Return to England—Jesse Lee—New England—Asbury's Visit 128

CHAPTER XX.

1792.

Returns Southward—Cokesbury Troubles—Virginia Conference—North Carolina Conference—Troubles in Charleston—Georgia Conference—Beverly Allen's Expulsion—Tour to Kentucky—Northward Again 136

CHAPTER XXI.

1793–1794.

Southern Tour—Great Exposure—William McKendree—Tour to the North—Southward Again—The College—R. R. Roberts 153

CHAPTER XXII.

1795.

Episcopal Journeyings—Death of Judge White—The Ennalls Family—Governor Van Cortlandt—Return South.. 160

CHAPTER XXIII.

1796.

South Carolina—Georgia—North Carolina—Tennessee—Virginia—Views on Education—Bridal Party in the Mountains—Methodism in Brooklyn—Southward Again—Francis Acuff 166

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXIV.

1797.

PAGE

Charleston—Sickness—Northward Journey—Breaks Down in Kentucky—Reaches Baltimore—Goes on His Tour Northward—Jesse Lee—Returns South—Gives Up at Brunswick, Virginia, and Retires for the Winter..... 170

CHAPTER XXV.

1798.

Asbury Out of His Sick Room—Recovery—Views on Slavery—On Local Preachers—Some of His Mistakes—Virginia Conference—O'Kelly—Tour Northward—Death of Dickins..... 177

CHAPTER XXVI.

1799.

Asbury in the Last Year of the Century—Charleston—North Carolina—Advice of Physicians—Feebleness of Whatcoat—Jesse Lee and Benjamin Blanton—Henry Parks—Tait's, Pope's, and Grant's—Extensive Tour Through Georgia—Charleston Again..... 183

CHAPTER XXVII.

1800.

Beginning of the New Century—Asbury Rests a Month—Washington's Death—Nicholas Snethen—General Conference—Great Revival—Whatcoat's Election as Bishop—Journey Northward 188

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1801.

Troubles About Slavery—Death of Jarratt—Northern Tour—Revival Days—Southern Tour—Charleston Again..... 198

CHAPTER XXIX.

1802.

Northward Again—A View of the Virginia Conference—Baltimore—His Mother's Death—Meeting with O'Kelly—Over the Alleghanies—Exposure in Tennessee—Sickness—McKendree—Reaches Camden and Rembert's.... 205

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXX.

1803.

PAGE

The South Carolina Conference—Scotch in North Carolina—Mr. Meredith's Work in Wilmington—Cumberland Street Church in Norfolk—Northward Journey—Merchandise of Priests in Boston—Southward Again—Trip to Ohio—Kentucky—Dr. Hinde and His Blister—Journey to Charleston—Conference at Augusta..... 209

CHAPTER XXXI.

1804.

Conference in Augusta—Reasons for Never Marrying—Journey Northward—General Conference Slavery Question Again—Confined by Sickness—Letter to Hitt Journey to the West, and Thence to Charleston..... 218

CHAPTER XXXII.

1805.

Journey Northward—Letter to Hitt—Conference in North Carolina—Episcopal Trials—Journey to the North—Journey to the West and the South..... 225

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1806.

Asbury Alone—Coke Offers to Come to America—Offer Declined—Camp Meetings in the East—Whatcoat's Death—Western Tour Southern Tour..... 233

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1807.

Asbury Alone—Journey Northward—Western New York—Visits Ohio, and Goes Through Kentucky to Georgia—Views on Education..... 240

CHAPTER XXXV.

1808.

South Carolina Conference—George Dougherty—Northward Journey Through New Virginia—Baltimore—General Conference—Death of Harry Gough—Conference Legislation—Election of McKendree—Tour of the Bishops—Meets William Capers—Capers's Recollections..... 246

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1809.

PAGE

McKendree's New Departure—Northward Tour—Conference at Harrisonburg—Journey to New England—Western New York—Western Conference in Cincinnati—Journey to Charleston..... 257

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1810.

Asbury and McKendree on Their Second Tour—The Virginia Conference—Mary Withey's Funeral—New York Conference—New England—Jesse Lee's History—Lee and Asbury—Genesee Conference—Western Conference—Senator Taylor..... 266

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1811.

Asbury in His Old Age—Sweetness of His Character—Criticism on Adam Clarke—Visits Canada—Returns to the States—Goes to Ohio and Southward to Georgia..... 271

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1812.

Near the Close—General Conference—Presiding Eldership—Benson's Life of Fletcher—Ohio—Nashville..... 277

CHAPTER XL.

1813.

Asbury's Last Effective Year—Northward Again—Whitehead's Life of Wesley—Things in New England—Western Journal—Epistle to McKendree—Charleston Again. 282

CHAPTER XLI.

1814–1815.

The Sun Going Down—Goes Northward—Long Attack of Sickness in Pennsylvania—John Wesley Bond—McKendree Crippled—Reaches Nashville—Georgia for the Last Time—Goes Northward—The West Again—Surrenders All Control to McKendree..... 288

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XLII.

1816. PAGE

Asbury's Last Journey—The Sun Goes Down—Granby, South Carolina Journey to Richmond—Last Sermon—Reaches Mr. Arnold's—Death Scene..... 295

CHAPTER XLIII.

Asbury's Religious Experience..... 301

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Character of Francis Asbury..... 306

Digitized by Microsoft®

LIFE AND LABORS OF FRANCIS ASBURY.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

FRANCIS ASBURY.

CHAPTER I.

1745–1771.

Asbury's Birth—Family of Joseph Asbury—Childhood—Conversion—Apprenticeship—The Local Preacher—On a Circuit—The Missionary.

FRANCIS ASBURY was the son of Joseph Asbury and Elizabeth Rogers, his wife. He was born on the 20th or 21st day of August, 1745, about five miles from Birmingham, Staffordshire, England. His father was a sturdy yeoman, a gardener for the great folks, or perhaps a manager of the gentlemen's estates. He had a home of his own, was industrious, sober, thrifty, and might have been wealthy, Asbury said, if he had not been so liberal.

The family whose name he bears, and from whom he probably sprang, were large landholders in Staffordshire, and John Evans, the father of "George Eliot," was a tenant on their estate. If Joseph Asbury sprang from this stock, he was evidently one of its poorer members; but what he lacked in vested funds he made up in industry and capacity, and no lord in England was more independent than the good gardener of Staffordshire.

There were but two children in the little family, one of whom, a girl, died in infancy. Joseph Asbury was able and willing to give his only son a good education, and sent him to school early, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

he was able to read at between six and seven years of age. But the master of the school used to beat the sensitive boy so cruelly that his distaste for the school became fixed, and he was permitted to discontinue attendance upon it before he was twelve years old. He was then employed as a servant in a wealthy and ungodly family; but when he was near fourteen years old, he chose the trade of a saddler, and was apprenticed to a kind master, with whom he remained until he was nearly of age.

His parents were Church-of-England people of the best type, and he was carefully brought up. "He never," he says, "dared an oath or hazarded a lie, and was always a prayerful, religious child, abhorring mischief and wickedness." His comrades called him *parson;* and when the brutal schoolmaster so cruelly flogged him, he found relief in prayer. The good mother, always hospitable, and especially so to preachers, invited a pious man—not a Methodist, however—to her home. The young son was awakened by hearing him talk, and began to be more careful in attention to his religious duties. The parish priest, at whose church the family worshiped, was not a converted man, and so the young inquirer went to another church, opened to Whitefield's preachers. Here he heard the leading evangelical preachers of that day, and into his hands came the sermons of Whitefield and Cennick, which he read with great interest. He became anxious to hear the Wesleyans, and sought them out, and joined their society; and while praying with a young companion in his father's barn, he was consciously converted. He now began to go among the laborers and farmers,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and talk to them of religion, and at his father's house he frequently held meetings. He met a class regularly. He seems to have had no license to preach, but he was really a local preacher before he was seventeen. After some months, he exercised his gifts in the Methodist chapel, and became, while a saddler's apprentice, a regular local preacher. He was a cheerful and ready helper of the traveling preachers, and worked diligently in the shires about, preaching three, four, and even five times a week. After thus laboring for five years as a local preacher, he entered the traveling connection.

He says little of his work in England, and we do not know from him what were the circuits that he traveled; nor does he mention any interviews he had with Mr. Wesley, but he met him every year, doubtless, and Mr. Wesley learned to value the honest, sturdy young man, so faithful to the work put into his hands.

Mr. Wesley had heard the call for more laborers for America, and sent Boardman and Pilmoor; and now, in 1771, he needed others to help them. Young Asbury volunteered to go, and, with Richard Wright, he was chosen for the distant field. It was his intention to remain six years, and then return to England, but he never went back. The ten years which had elapsed since he began his work as a preacher had not been idle ones. He had studied hard, and improved greatly. It is evident that he had become a preacher of no mean parts and of no insignificant attainments before he began his work in the new world. It was a hard thing for him to leave the good parents who had done so much for him, and for

Digitized by Microsoft®

them to surrender their only child, but they cheerfully gave him up, and he went to Bristol by Mr. Wesley's order to take his departure on his mission work.

Of Joseph Asbury the son says little more than has been written above. He lived to be quite an old man, passing beyond his fourscore years. He was evidently a good man of no remarkable parts. Asbury's mother was a woman of good mind, and good culture for those times; a woman of deep piety, and of great devotion to the Church. Asbury was an affectionate son, and used a liberal part of his small income to add to the comfort of the good people in England as long as they lived.

His early life was spent in close contact with the best English people, and in his boyhood he was an inmate of a gentleman's family, and was thus trained in the best school of manners, and acquired the most refined tastes. His access to and welcome into the best families of America after he became an American itinerant were perhaps due in no small degree to his early training.

While his early education was not advanced, it was correct as far as it went, and very great diligence in after time made him a scholar of no mean kind. When he began the study of the languages he does not say, but not in all probability till after he came to America; but before he took his departure from England he had secured a very respectable acquaintance with the best religious literature, and especially with that excellent selection of books from the old Puritans which Mr. Wesley had republished.

Digitized by Microsoft®

With this equipment he presented himself as a candidate for what was really a foreign mission, and with little idea of the great work he was to do, bade England a long and, as it proved, a last farewell. He says but little of the circumstances attending his appointment, and no one perhaps of all Mr. Wesley's preachers expected less what was to be his future than he did. No man ever went to a work with purer intent than this young circuit preacher. He came, with a spirit of perfect consecration, to Bristol, which was the seaport from which the American ships generally sailed to the western shores, and, in company with Richard Wright, took shipping in the fall of 1771 to come to America and assist Boardman and Pilmoor.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER II.

1771–1772.

The Young Missionary—Passage from Bristol—Incidents of the Voyage—Arrives at Philadelphia—Goes to New York—View of New York in 1771—Journey to Maryland.

THE missionary to Japan or China in 1896 makes an easier and a quicker passage than the two young Englishmen made from Bristol to Philadelphia in 1771.

Richard Wright, the companion of Asbury, seems to have been unsuited to the work for which he volunteered, and his career in America was not creditable.

Asbury was now in his twenty-sixth year, and had been a preacher for ten years. He was intensely in earnest, and no man ever went on a mission with greater purity of intention. His father and mother were poor, and it was evident that he had made little by his preaching or his saddle-making, for when he reached Bristol, from which port he was to take shipping to Philadelphia, he had not a shilling in his pocket.

The Bristol Methodists were, next to those of London, the wealthiest Methodists in England, and they raised a purse of ten pounds to supply the needs of the missionaries. They forgot, however, that the voyagers would need beds to sleep on, and when the ship was under way the young preachers found that

Digitized by Microsoft®

they must be content with two blankets as a couch across the seas.

The voyage was more than eight weeks long, and they had preaching every Sunday. Sometimes the winds were fresh, but the young preacher stood propped by the mizzenmast and preached to the somewhat insensible sailors, and in the weary week-days gave himself to the reading of good books. He does not seem to have had many. He read the "Pilgrim's Progress;" Edwards's account of the great revival in New England which took place thirty-five years before, and of which the good man found but few traces when, a score of years after this, he entered New England himself; and the life of M. de Renty, the Catholic ascetic, who had no little to do with the austerities to which the early preachers unwisely subjected themselves. These books, with the Bible, gave him employment during the weary days of a tedious voyage. At last, after having been nearly two months on the way, Philadelphia was reached. There was a society here and a hundred members, and a meetinghouse; and Mr. Francis Harris met the long-looked-for reënforcements, and took them to his home. There was a meeting that night, and Mr. Asbury and Mr. Wright went to it and were introduced to the American Methodists. Mr. Pilmoor was here as pastor and Mr. Boardman was in New York, and after a few days' stay, during which Mr. Asbury preached, he then began his journey through the Jerseys to York, as he called New York. The societies in those days furnished a horse to the helpers and on horseback the journey was made.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Some years before this an English captain who had lost one eye at Louisburg was in Bath, England, and heard Mr. Wesley preach. He was converted and began to work as a lay preacher, and when he was made barrack master in Albany, in America, an office which seems to have demanded little attention, he began to work as a lay preacher in New York, and went thence into the Jerseys and to Philadelphia. He became a leading spirit among the Methodists in both cities, and marked out a circuit for himself between them.

Asbury met in Philadelphia a Mr. Van Pelt, a farmer from Staten Island, who had heard him preach, and consented, at his instance, to visit the island on his way to New York. There were a few small societies in New Jersey which had been organized by Captain Webb, but there seems to have been none in Staten Island. Mr. Van Pelt and Justice Wright, however, gave him their houses as preaching places, and before he reached New York City he preached in the island.

About five years before Asbury came, in the house of Philip Embury, an Irish carpenter, the first Methodist sermon in New York had been preached by Embury himself, and he had meetings there. Captain Webb came to his help, and when the house proved to be too small they went to a rigging loft, and then a stone church was projected and built, and in it the little society was now worshiping. When Asbury came to the city he found the society already organized and in working order. Captain Webb, Robert Williams, and Mr. Boardman had all worked here. New York was now quite a growing town, almost

Digitized by Microsoft®

as large as Philadelphia. There were in it seventeen churches. Of these the Episcopalians had three; the High Dutch, or Reformed German, one; the Low Dutch, or Dutch Reformed, two; the Lutherans, two; the French Protestants, one; the Presbyterians, two; the Seceders, one; the Baptists, one; and the Methodists, one. The Methodists had gathered a small society, and some of its members were men of substance. Among these was William Lupton, who had married a rich widow and was a well-to-do merchant. The clergymen of the Church of England in the city were evidently friendly to the new society, and each of them made a generous contribution when the new church was built. Near by the stone church a little parsonage had been erected, and a colored woman was secured as housekeeper and maid of all work. Such supplies as the preachers needed were furnished by Mr. Newton, the steward. The barber was employed to shave them, the physician to attend them, and the charge for castor oil indicates a proper, if not pleasant, provision for the cure of their ailments. Mr. Pilmoor, Mr. Williams, and now Mr. Boardman, had preceded Mr. Asbury. Mr. Williams and Mr. Pilmoor had each been furnished by liberal stewards with a beaver hat which cost £2 5s. apiece.*

When the young Englishman, full of missionary ardor, came into the city he found Captain Webb and Mr. Boardman both there. He began to feel restless in a little while, and he expressed his dissatisfaction to himself in his journal. The preachers, he thought, ought to circulate; they were too fond

* Wakeley.

Digitized by Microsoft®

of the city. And so, after a little while, he struck out for himself to form his circuit in the country around. He went to Staten Island, Long Island, East Chester, and West Farms. He preached every day in the week in the country, and then returned to the city for his Sunday work.

If Mr. Asbury had been a vigorous man in England, his health failed soon after he came to America. It was a rare thing for him to be perfectly well after that, if we may judge from his journal; and, indeed, living as he did, he could scarcely have hoped for health. He rose at four in the morning, or soon after, preached when he could at five, traveled fifteen or twenty miles a day over wretched roads, faced all kinds of severe weather, and observed an entire fast one day in the week and a partial fast on another. He did not find things to suit him in New York. He was not well, and perhaps he was a little exacting. Methodism was new in America, and Mr. Newton and Mr. Lupton and the other trustees had heads of their own, and did not see things as he did; but as he was only to stay a little while now, and as Mr. Boardman was in charge, he said nothing about it save in his journal. After a few months around New York and in it, he turned his face toward Philadelphia, preaching in the villages in Jersey along the way. New Jersey was thickly peopled in that day, but it was not fruitful ground for the Methodists. The Presbyterians had a strong hold in the colony, and during the days of the Tennents and Mr. Whitefield there had been a great revival among them, and twenty years before this the college at Princeton had been established. The

Digitized by Microsoft®

Quakers were numerous, but the Church people among whom the early Methodists found their first adherents were not many, yet in the towns Captain Webb had founded a few societies.

Asbury now came to Philadelphia, where he took charge. Philadelphia was at that time the most important city in America. It had been settled now a hundred years; all around it was a fertile land, and it was the market and trading center of the newly-settled valleys of Maryland and Virginia, as well as of Pennsylvania. The Quakers had now become wealthy, respectable, and worldly. They had the garb of George Fox, but the utilitarian spirit of their townsman, the enterprising printer, Benjamin Franklin, was more common than the heavenly mind of the earnest reformer. There were fervent souls among them, but the mass was absorbed in the one idea of making gain. There was a very friendly feeling toward the society on the part of the Church people, and Captain Webb had organized a society of a hundred souls, and they had bought an old church and had services regularly. There were a number of country appointments attached to the city charge, and Mr. Asbury preached somewhere every day. He was a born disciplinarian. He demanded strict obedience to orders. He gave it himself, and he expected it from everyone else. In his endeavor to carry out these measures in Philadelphia he met very stern opposition, but while he felt it keenly, it did not cause him to swerve. He remained his three months in Philadelphia, and then he went to New York again and relieved Mr. Wright. This young man, he said, had nearly ruined every-

Digitized by Microsoft®

thing by having a general love feast. It was evident to him that Mr. Wright had been spoiled, and he determined to be on his guard. He watched all men closely, and (Mr. Rankin thought) somewhat suspiciously; but he watched no one as he watched himself, and demanded from no one what he did not ask from himself. He was naturally genial and cheerful, and could have been a bright companion, but he thought it was wrong to be so, and reproached himself for being too light. He was troubled on his first visit to New York by certain things which needed to be mended, and now when he was in charge he found himself where it was his duty to mend them. His journal gives us an insight into the usages of the strongest society in America. There was public preaching on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights. On Sunday there were two sermons, evidently out of Episcopal Church hours. The society was to have a private meeting on Sunday night. The preacher was to meet the children and the stewards once a week.

There was evidently a good understanding between the society and the Church, and the rector of one of the churches seems to have had a sacramental service at the chapel, and at this communion there were negro communicants, much to Asbury's delight. Things, however, did not go to suit him. He was sure that he was right, but the stewards did not see it so, and at last he was constrained to take the chief among them, Mr. Lupton, to task. He told him plainly of how he avoided him, of how he did not attend the leaders' meeting, how he appeared to dissimulate, opposed the rules, and consulted peo-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ple not in the society. Mr. Asbury was not twenty-seven years old, and had been less than a year in America, and Mr. Lupton was a portly merchant, the wealthiest man in his charge; and so the daring young man was taken to task by Mr. Newton, as all who have done the like are to this day. Mr. Newton complained of the manner in which the worthy Lupton had been treated, and told Mr. Asbury plainly that he preached the people away, and that the whole work would be destroyed by him. This was very painful, all of it; but just then he received a letter from Mr. Wesley urging him to mind all things, great and small, in the discipline; and so he read the letter to the society, and went on his way in spite of Mr. Lupton and Mr. Newton. The three months of his time in New York, however, were nearly over, and they soon ended, and he left for his new work in Maryland.*

*The facts concerning the New York society are largely drawn from that valuable book, "Wakeley's Lost Chapters."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER III.

1772.

Journey to Maryland—Bohemia Manor—Strawbridge—Frederick County—View of Maryland—Asbury's First Round—Goes to Baltimore—View of Baltimore—Into Kent County—Conflict with the Parson—Sickness.

TO no man does Maryland owe a greater debt than to Francis Asbury. He worked a part of every year for nearly fifty years in her borders, and in his palmy days gave to her his best labor. He claimed Maryland as his home, his dearest friends were among her people, and near Baltimore his body rests. He came to America in the fall of 1771, and in the fall of 1772 he went to Maryland to aid Strawbridge, who had been at work for six years, and who had laid out the circuit which Asbury was now to travel. Strawbridge had joined him in Philadelphia, and he and Asbury began their journey to Maryland. They made their first stop at Bohemia Manor. This was in Cecil county, Maryland, near the Delaware line, and had been a favorite stopping place of Whitefield's. The section was settled by old English and Huguenot families; and as Mr. Whitefield came southward he found warm sympathizers among these large planters. The Bayards, Bouchelles, and Herseys lived here; and Mr. Wright, Mr. Asbury's colleague, had been so delighted with the people that he had spent his first three months almost altogether among them. He was so much attached to them that it was feared he would settle

Digitized by Microsoft®

there. We find many allusions to this excellent neighborhood in the journals of the earlier preachers. To reach Bohemia they came through Newcastle and Chester, in Delaware, crossed the river at a place he calls Susquehanna, and began their first round in western Maryland.

Six years before, Strawbridge, a fervid young Irishman, found himself in Frederick county, a penniless immigrant. Around him was a large and comparatively new settlement of English people. Some of them were Quakers; many of them, like himself, Church-of-England people, but, unlike himself, they were merely nominal Christians. They were many of them well-to-do tobacco planters, with quite a number of slaves, comfortable in their circumstances, easy in their lives, orthodox in their faith, but entirely ignorant of anything like spiritual religion. The gifted, earnest, pious young Irishman began on his own motion to hold meetings among them, and organized them into Methodist societies. His preaching made a profound impression on the community, and some of the best people in it joined the society. They built a little log church, which Asbury said was the first in America, and of which we shall hear after awhile. When Boardman and Pilmoor came, they found Strawbridge hard at work; and now that a regular circuit had been laid out, Asbury came to aid him. Asbury had been only among the small farmers of New York and New Jersey, but he now found himself in a colony where there were large plantations and many slaves. The interior part of this country had been settled for not much more than fifty years; and as land was very

Digitized by Microsoft®

cheap, and when first opened very fertile, and as negro labor was easily secured, the wealth of the country was already considerable.

Although Maryland had been settled by the Catholics, the Episcopal Church was now the established one; but all classes of Christian people were tolerated, and in this colony alone were the Roman Catholics in any number. They were, however, confined to the western shore, and were not many in proportion to the Protestant population. The Quakers were numerous, and there were a few Baptists. The bulk of the population were Church-of-England people in their affiliations. The journals of Asbury, which were very full, reveal the religious destitution of this part of Maryland. He mentions the church in Baltimore, the church in which Parson West preached in upper Harford, a church in Frederick City, and a church at Chestertown in Kent. These were all the established churches he mentions. There were in Baltimore (then a city of perhaps six thousand people) churches of several denominations, but, as far as we can see, few of any name outside of it.

The preaching of Strawbridge had been in private houses, and Asbury found these various stations opened to him. A view of the condition of things in Maryland at that time can be secured only by looking with some care into the mention he makes of the various homes which received him. He says that before Strawbridge came the people had been swearers, cock-fighters, horse-racers, and drunkards, but had become greatly changed. William Watters and Joshua Owings, two sterling young men, had

Digitized by Microsoft®

been led by Strawbridge to give themselves to the traveling ministry, while Nathan Perigau and Henry Watters were lay preachers. Strawbridge had preached extensively in Baltimore, Harford, Carroll, and Howard counties, and had secured the conversion of a number of most excellent people. The work of Strawbridge has not received its proper consideration. Mr. Asbury and the strong-willed Irishman did not always agree, and, it may be, he did not rate his work as highly as it should have been rated; but the journals of Asbury show at least something of what had already been accomplished by his predecessor.

The two preachers had begun their round in Harford, and turned their course toward the northwestern part of the state. They were received into the homes of the planters, and for the first time since Asbury had been in America he found himself in their houses. He was a stern young Englishman of the straitest Wesleyan views, and when he visited Dr. Warfield he was much shocked by the extravagant headdresses of the polite ladies he met there. He went to Frederick City on this round. Here he found a considerable town. It had in it now two German churches (the Lutheran and the Reformed), an Episcopal and a Roman Catholic church. He went over into the Virginia Colony to Winchester, where he preached in an unfinished house. On his return to Maryland he stopped and preached at Joshua Owings's, who had been one of Strawbridge's first adherents. The widow Bond, whose husband was a Quaker, and whose descendants have been so distinguished as Methodists (for she was the grand-

Digitized by Microsoft®

mother of Thomas E. Bond, Sr., and the great-grandmother of Thomas E. Bond, Jr., the distinguished editor), received him into her house, which was a preaching place; and Henry Watters, the brother of William and Nicholas Watters, both of whom became distinguished as Methodist preachers, was another whom he met on his journey. Samuel Merryman, a pious Church-of-England man, who lived in a beautiful valley some twenty miles from Baltimore, and John Emory, the father of Bishop Emory and the grandfather of Robert Emory, were already Methodists. From the home of Emory, which was only a few miles from Baltimore, he made his first entry into Baltimore town on December 25, 1772. An old map of Baltimore town, made some thirty years before Asbury came, shows that where the busy city is now there were at that time only the possibilities of one; but in these thirty years it had grown rapidly, and from Jones's Run on the east to what is now Hanover street on the west, and from Main (now Baltimore) street to the Bay, it was somewhat thickly settled. M. de Warville, who visited it in 1789, says the streets were unpaved and very filthy, and there were about fourteen thousand people in it. The country through which he passed to reach it was badly tilled, and the slaves were naked and poorly fed; but the philosopher was in no humor to see anything good in a slaveholding colony.

Where Asbury preached on this visit he does not say, nor do we know who entertained him; but on his return we know he preached in the house of the widow Tribulet, a member of the German Reformed Church, at the corner of Tribulet alley and Main

Digitized by Microsoft®

(now Baltimore) street, and in the house of Captain Paten, a clever and well-to-do Irishman, at the Point. From Baltimore, in company with several good women — the widow Huling, Mrs. Rogers, and some others — he went to Nathaniel Perigau's, six miles from the city. Nathaniel Perigau was converted under the preaching of Strawbridge, and began at once to work, as did Owings and Watters. He was the means of the conversion of Philip Gatch.

Baltimore county was a very large county, including what is now several counties. Baltimore, which was at this time a small town, and Joppa, on the Gunpowder River, which was at that time a declining port, were the only towns of any size in this western part of Maryland. Most of the people were poor, and lived in a plain way. Some families possessed a large holding of land and a considerable body of negroes. There were the Howards, Goughs, Ridgeleys, Carrolls, Eagers, and others, who had large estates near the new city; but the mass of the people were like Strawbridge—if they owned their land, they had little besides. They lived in log houses, and in a very simple way. The country immediately around Baltimore was fertile, and the country people came to the Point to hear this zealous young Englishman. It is likely that at this time he became the means of the conversion of Sarah Gough, who, with her husband, was for so long a time his most devoted friend. According to Dr. Atkinson, Mr. Pilmoor had organized a society in the city some time before Asbury came; if so, Asbury makes no mention of it, nor does he speak of organizing one himself on this visit. He had a large circuit,

Digitized by Microsoft®

which included all western Maryland. He belonged to the race of circuit riders. He preached in the city on Sunday, and went to the country, where he preached every day. The roads were execrable; the cold was very severe. In going to an appointment, the very tears, as they fell, were frozen; but still he went on.

The preachers met in quarterly meeting to divide out the work, to receive their stipends, and to consult about matters. Mr. Asbury, Mr. Strawbridge, Mr. King, and Isaac Rollins were at the Conference. The Conference met at James Presbury's, in what was then Baltimore county, now Harford county, Maryland, on the 23d of December, 1772. Although this is the first Quarterly Conference of which we have record, it is evident that others had been held by Mr. Strawbridge, who had begun to work on his own responsibility, and at these he administered the sacrament. Mr. Boardman had quietly acquiesced in that innovation, but Mr. Asbury did not think it the thing to do. Mr. Wesley had not done so, nor had he permitted his preachers to do so. Mr. Boardman had not, Mr. Asbury had not, and he could not consent to this young Irishman's course; but for the sake of peace he withdrew his objections, and Strawbridge administered the sacrament to no one's hurt as far as we can see. On Sunday Mr. Asbury took the sacrament from the regularly ordained parson West. The funds were divided, and for his three months' work Mr. Strawbridge received £8 and King and Asbury £6 each. He preached at this quarterly meeting, and gives us in his journal a skeleton of his sermon, which was suf-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ficiently practical, and, like most of the sermons of those days, covered all the ground. The text was, "Take heed unto yourselves." "1. Take heed to your spirits. 2. Take heed to your practices. 3. Take heed to your doctrines. 4. Take heed to your flocks: (1) Those under conviction; (2) Those that are true believers; (3) Those that are sorely tempted; (4) Those groaning for full redemption; (5) Those who have backslidden." The appointments were now made by a kind of mutual agreement, and Mr. Asbury came to the Baltimore Circuit again. Before this Conference he opened a new field.

On the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay, nearly opposite the counties of Baltimore and Harford, is and was the old county of Kent. It was the first part of the state of Maryland which was settled, and was at this time thickly populated. The settlers were almost entirely English people. The large German element in western Maryland had no place here. The people were generally well-to-do planters, who lived in the easy way of those times, and were connected with the Establishment. Methodism had not made any decided impression on them up to this time, but they were not, perhaps, entirely unacquainted with the Methodist preacher, and some of them were quite friendly to the Methodist movement. Strawbridge and King had probably made a tour through Kent; but if so, they had organized no societies.

The rector of the parish, however, was not disposed to welcome the intruder on his domain. Said Mr. Asbury: "Mr. R. came to me, and desired to know who I was and whether I was licensed. I

Digitized by Microsoft®

told him who I was. He spoke great swelling words, and told me he had authority over the people, as he was charged with the care of their souls, and that I could not and should not preach; and if I did, he would proceed against me according to the law. I let him know that I came to preach, and *preach I would*, and further asked him if he had authority over the people and was charged with the care of their souls, and if he was a justice of the peace, and said I thought he had nothing to do with me. He charged me with making a schism. I told him that I did not draw the people from the church, and asked him if his church was then open. He told me I hindered the people from their work. But I asked him if fairs and horse races did not hinder them. I further told him that I came to help him. He said he had not hired an assistant, and did not want my help. I told him if there were no swearers or other sinners, he was sufficient. But he said, 'What did you come for?' I replied, 'To turn sinners to God.' He said, 'Cannot I do that as well as you?' I told him I had an 'authority from God.' He then laughed at me, and said, 'You are a fine fellow indeed.' I told him I did not do this to invalidate his authority, and also gave him to understand that I did not wish to dispute with him; but he said he had business with me, and came into the house in a great rage. I began to preach, and urged the people to repent and turn from their transgressions, that iniquity should not be their ruin. After preaching, the parson went out and told the people they did wrong in coming to hear me; that I spoke against learning."

Digitized by Microsoft®

As the people had little use for the parson, and little taste for paying the tobacco demanded for his support, this encounter did the young circuit rider no harm, but rather added to his popularity. He found a good field for his work here, but he seems to have tarried but a little while, and then he went northward to the head of the Elk River and over into Delaware. His work during this visit seems to have been that of an explorer. He does not appear to have organized societies, but preached, as he went, to white and black.

His stay in Maryland was nearing its close. Mr. Pilmoor was, perhaps, the ruling spirit among the preachers, and he was not pleased with some things his younger colleague did; and while Asbury was on this visit he received a letter from him. He does not tell us what was in it, but speaks of it as "*such a letter.*" The fact was doubtless that the younger man had shown his independence, and Mr. Pilmoor thought it was his duty to curb him. Asbury comforted himself with saying and feeling that God knew. Poor Francis, as he called himself, was doomed all his life, and, as far as that is concerned, for all the years since he passed away, to be misunderstood, and his motives misread; and perhaps he did no little of the same work when he made up his verdict concerning other people.

The upper part of Maryland bordering on Pennsylvania was in his circuit, and Mr. Strawbridge, Abraham Whitworth, and Mr. King met him at the quarterly meeting at Susquehanna. The sacrament does not seem to have been administered at this time, but strict inquiry was made into the state of

Digitized by Microsoft®

the societies. It was thought there were no disorderly members in the societies. The people paid their debts, but the questions as to whether there was no dram-drinking, whether band meetings were kept up, and as to whether the preachers were blameless, are not answered.

Mr. Asbury, after this Conference, went to Baltimore, but only to get ready for his journey to New York. He had spent his first six months in Maryland, and had gone over nearly all the western part of the state, but did his main work in what are now Baltimore and Harford counties, in the meantime paying a visit to Kent and Delaware.

The families he met with give us a glimpse of what kind of people the first Maryland Methodists were. Henry Watters, the brother of William and Nicholas Watters, was one of his first hearers. He was already in the society. Charles Ridgeley, Dr. Warfield, Mr. Giles, Joseph Dallam, and Joshua Owings, Mrs. Huling, Mrs. Rogers, Nathan Perigau, James Presbury, who was a relative of Freeborn Garrettson, Mr. Merryman, and Mr. Emory, were all of them among his hearers, and at many of their houses he had a preaching place. The Quakers were particularly kind to the early Methodists, and he mentions them very often. Over in Kent Samuel Hinson, one of the old settlers, and a member of a distinguished family, entertained him, and became a constant friend. There was in Kent a Hinson's chapel named, doubtless, for him. He preached very earnestly on his favorite theme, "Perfect Love;" and while he did not profess it himself, he was earnest in seeking it and urging all to seek it.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Those who are familiar with Maryland and the families of Maryland can see what impression had even now been made. Mr. Asbury seems to have made a greater impression upon Baltimore and the Point than any who had preceded him. There were now at work in that part of Maryland quite a number of workers, and at the Conference which met in June, 1773, there were four preachers sent to Baltimore, and five hundred members of the society were reported. In New York and Philadelphia there were one hundred and eighty each; in Virginia, one hundred; in New Jersey, two hundred; but in Maryland, five hundred. They were chiefly found in Harford, Baltimore, and Frederick counties.

After this Conference he returned to Baltimore, but only to get ready for his journey to New York, to which place he went early in 1773.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IV.

1773–1774.

Asbury in Maryland Again—Goes to New York—To Philadelphia—Mr. Rankin's Arrival—The First General Conference—Maryland Once More.

MR. WESLEY had appointed Asbury assistant in charge of the work, but he took besides a regular circuit, and was in New York in May. He only remained one week, however, and then went to Philadelphia, visiting Staten Island by the way. He kept his journal with care, but says little of the incidents of his outer life, and merely makes record of his religious experience and of the sermons he preached. He was not thirty years old, but his piety was of the solidest sort, verging toward asceticism. Judging from his journal there seems never to have been a single intermission in his religious fervor, but he had seasons of great depression.

Reënforcements had been called for from England and sent, and on June 1st Mr. Thomas Rankin, Mr. George Shadford, and Mr. Yearby reached Philadelphia direct from England, and from Mr. Wesley.

Mr. Rankin superseded Mr. Asbury as general assistant, and immediately took charge of the societies. He preached his first sermon in America in Philadelphia, and Mr. Asbury thought he would not be admired as a preacher, but he had good hope that as a disciplinarian he would do well.

While he was in Philadelphia, like a good church-

Digitized by Microsoft®

man as he was, he went to church to receive the sacrament; and then the next week Mr. Rankin and himself went to New York, where Mr. Richard Wright was. Mr. Wright does not seem to have done anything grievously wrong, but he did not please his more serious brothers; and the sight of him and other concurring circumstances "affected Mr. Rankin so that he seemed to be cast down in his mind," but after Mr. Asbury's sermon his spirits revived, and in the afternoon Mr. Rankin, Captain Webb, Mr. Wright, and Mr. Asbury all went to St. Paul's and received the sacrament.

Mr. Asbury left his new superintendent in the city and visited his old friend Justice Wright on Staten Island. He here found at his house one who really believed that we were regenerate before we repented. He gave the obstinate Presbyterian Mr. Fletcher's second Check, then just from the press, fully persuaded, we doubt not, that if that failed to cure his heresy, his case was hopeless. Mr. Asbury soon returned to New York and went to work.

Mr. Lupton was still a little hard to please, and charged the stern Asbury with winking at the follies of the people, and said some other hard things sufficiently painful to the sensitive young preacher; but as he was no longer general assistant, and was not likely to stay long in New York, he bore the indignity that the portly steward put upon him, and went calmly on his way.

There had not been up to this time a Conference of all the preachers. Some of them had met together in their quarterly meetings, but it was now decided to call a General Conference. The name given to the

Digitized by Microsoft®

little assembly of Methodist preachers which met in Philadelphia in June, 1773, is the only feature of resemblance to the body of delegates who now meet under that name every four years. The minutes of this Conference have been preserved. They cover about half a page of octavo paper. There were ten preachers present and one thousand one hunderd and sixty members reported as in the society, of which Maryland had five hundred, and Virginia one hundred. Thomas Rankin presided, and fixed the appointments. Mr. Asbury, Mr. Whitworth, and Mr. Yearby were sent to Maryland, to take up the work so well begun.

Mr. Asbury went to his circuit and came again to Baltimore; and Mrs. Tribulet's new house, on Main street and Tribulet's alley, was freely lent for a preaching place. When it was known that there was to be preaching, he had a good congregation. He made another visit to Kent, and to his friend Mr. Hinson's. He had sent poor, rough, and, alas! unreliable Isaac Rollins to work in Kent, but the people would not bear with his rough address and perhaps slack morals.

We may now get an outline of Asbury's circuit. With Baltimore for a center, he went to Patapsco Neck; then to Charles Harriman's; then to James Presbury's, up the Bay; then over to Kent, on the eastern shore; then, recrossing the Bay, he went to Watters's and Dallam's, and to Pipe Creek. His circuit took him into the midst of the most malarious section of Maryland and at the sickly season, and he had a severe bilious attack which terminated in a quartan ague. In studying his journal, which

Digitized by Microsoft®

is an exceedingly dry detail of events, we are able to make out only the bare outlines of the work. There are evidences in it of a deep religious interest among some of the people. The doctrine of a sound, conscious conversion and the duty of a rigid adherence to the General Rules, and seeking with all earnestness for perfect love, were the burden of every sermon. He made no compromises; he was intensely in earnest, and so impressed himself on all who heard him. A protracted meeting was then an unknown thing. The preacher preached and went on his way.

He was now introduced by his good sister Huling into a family which did much for the struggling society. This was the family of Philip Rogers. Asbury's prayer was that the wicked man might become a disciple of Jesus, which prayer was graciously answered. The first revival in Baltimore began now to cheer him. He remained in Baltimore for a month, but no service like to the modern protracted meeting was held. He preached on Sunday three times, and on Wednesday night, and expected results at the regular service. During all this time he was really an invalid; a most obstinate attack of ague kept him in torture a large part of the time, but no sooner was the fever gone than he was at work again.

He was not a man to be trifled with. He knew his rights, and asserted them. He had taken out a regular license from the authorities under the toleration act, and demanded protection; and when certain drunken fellows of the baser sort raised a riot at the widow Tribulet's, which was promptly

Digitized by Microsoft®

suppressed by Philip Rogers, who had been their companion in sin, Mr. Asbury advised her to have them prosecuted, and it was no fault of his that they did not receive the punishment which they justly deserved.

The house of the good widow was not large enough to hold the people, and Mr. Moore invited them to his house. A church building was a necessity, but Asbury felt that it was too great a burden for him to undertake to build it. He went out on his country tour, and when he returned he found that William Moore had raised £100 and Philip Rogers had taken up two lots. These lots were on Lovely Lane. The November before this Jesse Hollingsworth, George Wells, Richard Moale, George Robinson, and John Woodward purchased a lot on Strawberry Alley on which to erect a church, and "on the 30th of the month," Mr. Asbury said, "we agreed with Mr. L. to begin the brick work of the church," which, according to Stevens, was commenced in November, 1774. On April 18, 1774, the foundation of the house in Baltimore was laid, and by the middle of October it was so far completed that they were able to preach in it. Stevens says the Strawberry Alley church was of brick, forty-one feet in length and thirty in width; that its opening was on Fleet street; that its pulpit was very high, and over it hung the sounding board. It was given to the negroes as early as 1801.

There seems to have been a constant revival in Baltimore, and Methodism made another inroad on the ranks of the godless and wealthy planters about the city. Mr. Gough and Mr. Charles Ridgeley and

Digitized by Microsoft®

Mr. Carroll attended the preaching of Mr. Asbury; and Captain Ridgeley was awakened, and Mr. Gough after this was converted and joined the society. Asbury had now two very plain brick chapels in which to preach, one at the Point and one in the city. Unornamented, uncomfortable houses they were, but they were for his use. They were simply brick, barn-like buildings, with rows of backless benches, a high pulpit, and a sounding board. The Methodists who attended the services here were drilled according to the English model, for Asbury was almost a Methodist ritualist. The lively song, the fervent prayer, the noisy sermon, then the earnest song came in regular order. The last two lines of the hymn sung, the congregation wheeled right about face, and, after repeating them, they all bowed on their knees for prayer. All were dressed alike in sober stuff, cut in the Methodist pattern, and all alike eschewed ruffles, rings, and feathers. There was no stove in the chapel, but they made up for the want of artificial heat by their zeal. These noisy meetings and lively sermons drew quite a congregation to the chapel, and in the Strawberry Alley and Lovely Lane chapels there was a decided interest all the time, and probably Mr. Asbury was the most interesting preacher in Baltimore. He could, however, stay only three months, and then he went to Norfolk, and it was quite a twelvemonth before he was in Maryland again.

Asbury's journal not only gives us an account of his work for the Church, but is filled with personal allusions, and we see what were his spiritual exercises and what his intellectual pursuits.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The whole story of his religious life at this time may be found in a few expressions. All is presented in them. He was thoroughly consecrated to God, and had but one aim, and that was to do his will perfectly. He had a varying experience as far as feeling was concerned; sometimes he was much depressed, sometimes he was full of peace, sometimes severely tempted, but he was always triumphant. It mattered not how he felt, his work was always done.

Mr. Rankin did not understand him. He underrated him, and perhaps Mr. Asbury was a little suspicious of Mr. Rankin, and thought his motives other than they were. He had, however, no serious disagreement with him while he was in Maryland during this stay.

He was very diligent in reading, and his reading was of the solidest kind—Neal's History of the Puritans, the Life of Calvin, the Reign of Christ, by Guiso, and Church history. One can hardly see how he could have found time for any reading or study, but he was constantly at work.

His old friend Captain Webb came out to see him, and remained in Baltimore for a little while. The Conference was to meet at Philadelphia the last of May, and after a year of useful work in Maryland he went to its session. At this Conference the young Englishman who had come over the year before, Joseph Yearby, was admitted into the connection, and Philip Gatch, a young Marylander; but Strawbridge was left out of the minutes, and Asbury's old companion, Richard Wright, was sent home. The stuff of which he was made was not

Digitized by Microsoft®

stern enough for the Spartan demands of men like Rankin and Asbury, and he was sent back to Mr. Wesley to be used by him in England, and disappears as far as we are concerned.

Poor, brave, conscientious Strawbridge was not willing to submit to the demands made upon him. He was willing to preach, and willing to suffer, and willing to die; but he was not willing to refuse the ordinances to people who otherwise could not have them because these good churchmen said so. He was not punished, but simply ignored; and now there were only nine assistants, but seven young helpers were admitted on trial.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER V.

1774.

Mr. Asbury in New York and Baltimore—New York Again—Discouragements—Mr. Rankin and Mr. Asbury—Richard Wright Goes Home—Asbury's Discipline—Religious Experience—Feebleness of Body—Goes Southward—Maryland Again.

THE Conference of 1774 closed, and Mr. Asbury was appointed again to New York, and he was soon at his place. He was sick and tired. Mr. Rankin was overbearing and inconsiderate, and Mr. Asbury said that but for the fact that he was conscious of the truth and goodness of the cause he would have gone back to England. He always found preaching a great help for his depressed spirits, and after preaching he went to see the incorrigible Wright. Alas! Wright had little taste for spiritual subjects, and his more pious associate says: "Lord, keep me from all superfluity of dress and from preaching empty stuff to please the ear. Thus he has fulfilled as a hireling his day."

Asbury did not find all the congregation at the stone church glad to see him; indeed, it was decidedly otherwise. "Mr. C. had written him an abusive letter, and was still exerting his unfriendly force." Nearly all, however, were pleased to have him come again, and some were comforted with the assurance he gave that the society should be purged. He believed in drastic remedies, as one can see by

Digitized by Microsoft®

reference to his memoranda of the medicines he used on himself, and he was not inclined to spare those committed to his care.

The most rigid Montanist was not more uncompromising than Asbury was. The society was no hospital to help the sick to convalescence, and if the tares were in the field, up the tares must come. The society was intended to help men and women to be good who were anxious to be so, and its rules were laid down for that purpose, and those rules "could be observed, and ought to be observed, and must be observed." He went to the St. Paul's Church as usual, but clearly saw where the gospel ministry was. Evidently it was in his view at the Methodist meetinghouse on John street. He went out into the meadows—where that was we do not know, but long lines of buildings have doubtless covered those meadows long ago—and there preached with plainness and power, and then preached in the city on Tuesday evening, and on Wednesday felt his heart glowing with divine love. "Blessed be God," he says, "my soul is kept in peace and power and love." His stay in New York was uneventful; he spent the larger part of his time in the city and made regular preaching tours into the country round about. His old adversary, Mr. Lupton, was entirely changed. He was on the best of terms with Asbury now that his old favorite, Wright, was gone.

The year in New York was one of great trial in many ways. The society was not what he thought it ought to be. There had been undue haste in receiving people into it, and their hearts were not right. Mr. Rankin was not agreeable, and wrote him un-

Digitized by Microsoft®

pleasant letters; his health was not good, for he had now been sick ten months and many days closely confined, but yet had preached three hundred times and ridden nearly two thousand miles. In all these trials and toils the heart of the pure young man was moving heavenward, and one day he says: "My soul is not so intently devoted to God as I would have it, though my desires for spirituality are very strong." Then again: "My heart enjoys great freedom and much peace, and love both toward God and man. Lord, ever keep me from all sin and increase the graces of the Holy Spirit in my soul." "I was much blessed," he says, "at intercession to-day, but shut up in preaching to-night." He makes great discoveries of defects and weaknesses. He rises early, but is weak in body and mind. "Now his mind is calm and comfortable, then he is assaulted by heavy trials." "His soul is at peace, but longs for to be more devoted to God." "He feels some conviction for sleeping too long, and his mind is troubled about a conversation between Mr. R., Mr. S., and himself." Then his mind is free, and his soul delights in God. "He taketh such possession of my heart as to keep out all desire for created objects. In due time I hope through Christ to enter into full fruition."

I have cited these extracts from his journal, not that they are important as giving us a true insight into the man, but to show how varying was the record he made—as varying as the record of any conscientious man who morbidly chronicles all the phases of his changing sensations. In all this time his faith never wavered, his love never abated, and his

Digitized by Microsoft®

loyalty to God had not the slightest weakening; and one cannot but regret that he evidently put such great stress upon these phases of mere sensation, and cannot but regret as well the morbidity with which he looked upon the violation of some arbitrary rules he had adopted as sins against God. Mr. William Law thought people slept too much, and Mr. John Wesley became his disciple, and he decided that six hours were enough for any man to sleep; and now poor Francis Asbury, sick and worn down, instead of staying in bed till he used nature's sweet restorer as physical health demanded, was dragging himself out of bed at an untimely hour or reproaching himself for sleeping too late because he did not do as Mr. Wesley said. One could only wish that his good old mother could have had the sick, tired preacher at her cottage for a few weeks, that she might have given him the benefit of her matronly counsel and care, and have put him to bed early in the night, and kept all things still and dark until the poor invalid had rested his fill. He, however, gives himself and his feelings what seems to us to be a little higher relative position than they were entitled to, and these extracts taken from his journal almost as they come show how varying were his experiences. His pilgrim's progress had more than seven stages: "My soul is in peace, but longs to be more spiritual." "I do not sufficiently love God nor live by faith." "Oh, what happiness did my soul enjoy with God!" "My mind was much taken up with God, but I must lament that I am not perfectly crucified with Christ." "My body was weak and my mind much tempted." "My soul is strength-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ened with might and filled with peace." "My heart is grieved and groaneth for want of more holiness." "Unguarded and trivial conversation has brought a degree of spiritual deadness." There are in his journal many like entries, which we might extract, but these are sufficient. The man who never has a thrill of spiritual joy is sadly to be pitied, but he is to be pitied also who longs to be thrilling all the time. The man who has no sense of sorrow for sin, and to whom a conscience never wakes, is certainly to be pitied; but so is he who is ever searching for some reason why God should condemn him.

He gives us a little insight into the way in which he prepared to preach, and his failure sometimes to succeed in expressing himself satisfactorily. He was diligent as a pastor, and mentions the case of a poor lost girl who sent for him when she was dying, and to whose bedside he went at the risk of censure.

He kept up his week-day appointments in the country, and spent his time otherwise entirely in the city. There were then in all New York city and state only two hundred and twenty-two members, and while care had been used to purge the societies, there were still those whose want of consistency greatly grieved the young pastor's heart. The imprudence of some and the loose conduct of others, he said, grieved him. He went regularly to hear the Dr. E. who filled St. Paul's pulpit. As he does not give his full name, and his remarks are by no means complimentary, we need not try to discover who he was. He went to church because he was a

Digitized by Microsoft®

good Christian, and it was his duty to go there; but the "doctor went on with his trumpery in his old strain, or was on his old tedious subject of the Lord's Supper. He cannot be at a loss in saying the same thing over and over."

Mr. Asbury's friends wished him to return to Baltimore, where his heart was, and where he was much needed, but Mr. Rankin refused him permission to go. There were now in New York Rankin, Webb, and Asbury; and Asbury asks what need can there be for two preachers to preach three times a week to sixty people. "On Thursday night about sixty people attended to hear Captain Webb. This is indeed a gloomy prospect."

Mr. Asbury was sick, and things bore to him a somewhat somber look, and he was much grieved at Mr. Rankin's conversation. What the genial Scotchman said which grieved him, we do not know. In truth, like some other young invalids of real goodness, he seems to have been somewhat easily grieved by the shortcomings of other people as well as by his own. The charge was too small for two men like Rankin and Asbury, and matters did not go smoothly. Asbury wrote Wesley, and read the letters to Rankin on the matters of difference. Rankin, Asbury said, "drove the people away by telling them how bad they were and what wonders he intended to do." At this day it looks to us that honest Tommie Rankin was a little arbitrary, and Mr. Asbury certainly so regarded him.

One of Asbury's numerous ailments came early in the new year, with more than usual severity. It was an ulcerated throat, for which he kindly gives

Digitized by Microsoft®

us a receipt for a gargle which is worth preserving: "Sage tea, honey, vinegar, and mustard; and after that another gargle of sage tea, alum, rose leaves, and loaf sugar, to strengthen the parts." The ailing throat brought Mr. Rankin to his bedside, and there was sweetness and love between them. At last Mr. Asbury decided to follow his heart and go southward, and so he took his journey to Baltimore. Whether Mr. Rankin consented we do not know, but there are intimations that Mr. Asbury acted on his own judgment.

He rode on horseback, and preached as he went. One of his happiest homes when he was first in Maryland had been that of Joseph Dallam, where the good old matron had treated him like a son; and as it was on his way, he called to spend an hour, and mentions it in his journal. No man ever had a tenderer love for his friends than Asbury had for those who had dealt kindly with him, and in Maryland he had made his attachments which lasted through his life. The good Eliza Dallam is enshrined in the hearts of Methodists because of her tenderness to the young and often suffering missionary. Asbury never forgot a kindness, and was never ungrateful for one, and she had nursed him like a child when he was ill; he, therefore, never fails to mention her.

He reached Baltimore, and found both at the Point and in the city large congregations to attend the ministry of their favorite preacher. It is evident that Asbury at this time was a preacher of greater power than he was in after years. After he became a bishop he was burdened with so many cares, and so constantly in motion and preached so frequently,

Digitized by Microsoft®

that he did not impress men from the pulpit as he did at this time. He still kept up his country appointments, and mentions preaching at William Lynch's, where the wealthy Charles Ridgeley was present. Charles Ridgeley was the planter who gave Strawbridge a home. Here at Lynch's he met Strawbridge, and they agreed fully in their estimate of Mr. Rankin; but "all these matters," Mr. Asbury says, "I can silently commit to God, who overrules both in earth and heaven."

He went into the country, into the Neck, and preached on the week days. Mr. Otterbein, the good German pietist, who was Asbury's lifelong friend, and Benedict Swope, his colleague, were living in Baltimore and at the Point, and were ready to co-operate with him in his work.

Thus in labors abundant and successful he spent his appointed time in Maryland.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VI.

1775.

Asbury's First Work in Virginia Norfolk—Portsmouth—Isaac Luke—County Work—Brunswick Circuit.

AT the Conference of 1775 Francis Asbury was appointed to Norfolk, and in the last of May he stepped from the deck of one of the Bay sailing boats, and entered upon his new field. One hundred and forty years before this the vestry of the Established Church in lower Norfolk had called Mr. Thomas Harrison, at a salary of £100, to take charge of Elizabeth River parish, and there was a preaching place in a private house; but now there was a new town on the left bank of the Elizabeth River, as well as the older on the other side. Norfolk, the younger of the twin sisters, was quite a flourishing little city. The tobacco which came from the then western counties of Virginia and from North Carolina, much of it, found shipment to England here; and into the port came the cargoes of rum, sugar, and molasses from the West Indies. There were two churches of the Church of England, one in Portsmouth and one in Norfolk. A few years before this Robert Williams had preached his first sermon in Portsmouth on the courthouse steps, and Mr. Isaac Luke had become his adherent. Mr. Luke secured an old storeroom for him to preach in, and an old playhouse had been utilized in Norfolk. Mr. Pilmoor and Mr. Wright had been there, and there had

Digitized by Microsoft®

been at least a foothold secured, and Mr. Asbury found the way laid out.

The people of the twin cities were noted for their wickedness. Nothing else perhaps could have been expected from their surroundings; but now, to add to Mr. Asbury's difficulties, the war excitement ran very high. The contrary winds which had tossed the little bark for a week on the Bay were but typical of the trials which were before him. There were only thirty nominal members, and few of these were willing to keep the rules; but yet he could gather these early summer mornings fifty people for morning service, and one hundred and fifty at night. The change from the well-appointed charge in New York and the hospitable counties around Baltimore to the friendlessness of Norfolk was rather chilling, but he consoles himself with the thought that much ballast is necessary to keep the ship steady, and that he needed humility. He went on with his work, preaching in Norfolk and Portsmouth three times on Sunday, and meeting the society besides. On Tuesday he skirted the Dismal Swamp, and went into St. Bride's parish and worked between Norfolk and Portsmouth. Gloomy as was the prospect, they tried to get a subscription for a church building, but could raise only a little over $150. He had an appointment six miles from Portsmouth toward Suffolk, one at Mill Creek, one at Northwest Woods, one at Mr. H.'s, and one at Craney Island. The people came in from the country to Norfolk to hear him, and he went as he could into the country during the week, and in the cities on Sunday. He tried to enforce the rules, and as usual met with opposition.

Digitized by Microsoft®

While he was in the midst of these troubles, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Rodda, and Mr. Dromgoole wrote him that they had decided to go back to England; but he would not consent to leave these three thousand souls, and so he wrote to Mr. Shadford. His letter to them seems to have had its effect, for it was two years after this before the Englishmen did return. He worked faithfully and zealously, and in September he had a three weeks' attack of fever. The British marines landed soon after, and sacked the printing office, and carried off the press of the rebellious printer, and altogether the times were out of joint. He, however, remained his four months out, and in November he began his journey southwest to Brunswick. During these days of almost exile, when his work seemed so fruitless, the devoted young preacher was filled with one earnest yearning; it was to be a holy man. He had peace and joy and constant communion with God, but he longed for perfect love.

In Brunswick there was a glorious revival fire blazing. This section of Virginia at that time was very populous and very prosperous. The Brunswick Circuit included in its boundaries Brunswick, Sussex, Surry, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Dinwiddie, Lunenburg, and Mecklenburg, and George Shadford had under his charge a corps of most efficient assistants. There had been a most wonderful revival which began under the ministry of Devereux Jarratt, and which Robert Williams, who died while Asbury was in Portsmouth, had done so much to advance. The country was thickly settled, and the well-to-do farmers, who peopled it and who

Digitized by Microsoft®

lived plainly, but in solid comfort, had been brought up as Church-of-England people, but the Church had secured no hold upon them. When the fervid Jarratt, and the saintly Williams, and the gifted Shadford had preached to these simple-hearted people the doctrines of the Methodists, they spoke in an unknown tongue, but at last such a revival as had not been known to this time in America began among them. After passing Southampton Courthouse, Asbury entered the circuit, and met Shadford and Francis Poythress, John Huey and James Hartley, who had such a hard time in Delaware a few years afterwards. Unhappily for us, Mr. Asbury adopted the English custom in his journal of merely using initials, and we are at a loss to mark out his line of work. He went through Brunswick into Dinwiddie, and met Mrs. Jarratt, who asked him to come into their parish. He went on by Parham's to Petersburg. On Sunday he preached twice in Petersburg, where he said many of the people seemed to care for none of these things. He went to see Jarratt, and a friendship was thus begun which was never ended; and after the death of the good churchman, Asbury preached his funeral sermon. After having gone around this large circuit twice, which took him three months, he left Virginia for Philadelphia.

It will be noticed that Shadford, Asbury, and Rankin seem to have made no allusions whatever to slavery in these their first visits. Their silence on this subject, and their keeping themselves closely to their legitimate work, was in decided contrast with the course taken years afterwards. It is not likely that slavery was more agreeable to the young preacher

Digitized by Microsoft®

now than it was ten years afterwards, but he did not then feel that his special mission was its overthrow. When he did yield to this pressure, he found that the course he had at first adopted was the only wise one.

He now began his journey to Philadelphia, and calling on some friends in Maryland, preaching as he went, he at last reached his destination.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VII.

1776.

The War Time—Mr. Wesley's Mistake—Asbury's View—Asbury Sick—Berkley Bath—Preaching—Conference at Deer Creek—Discussion on the Sacraments—Trouble with Mr. Rankin—Asbury Left Out of the Minutes—Goes to Annapolis—Test Oath—Retires into Delaware.

THE good Mr. Wesley, not satisfied with the troubles he had at home, and the paper battles with the Calvinists, and not content with making rules which his preachers were to keep and not to mend, had taken the colonies in hand, and was trying to show the English people that the taxation of the Americans was no tyranny, and that the rebels should disperse; but, alas! the rebels did not disperse; and little good did his honestly-written pamphlets do, and much embarrassment did they cause his preachers in America. It was thirty years after the war before the Methodist could purge himself from the charge of being a Tory. Mr. Rankin and Mr. Rodda and Mr. Boardman fully indorsed Mr. Wesley, but Mr. Asbury thought his course very unwise. The Continental Congress met in Philadelphia, and here Asbury was stationed, but it was to him as though it had not been. He had still that pertinacious ague, and was unable to get to Conference. It met in May, and he was appointed to Maryland again.

When he found that he was appointed to Baltimore, he began his journey southward; reached his

Digitized by Microsoft®

old friend Dallam's, and thence came to the city. He began his work with his accustomed earnestness. On the week days he went out into the country to preach, and returned to the city for his Sunday work. His child in the gospel, Philip Rogers, and his good wife were still faithful, and the rich Harry Gough and his lovely wife had been converted. Their elegant home at Perry Hall had now been opened to the Methodist preachers, and remained so for forty years. Gough was of noble family, and was the heir of a large estate in England. He then was worth $300,000, and at this time would be rated as worth largely over $1,000,000. He had been a frivolous, dissolute man, who had been influenced by his desire for amusement to go and hear Asbury. His wife had already been awakened, and he had opposed her; but now, when he heard Asbury, he was awakened and genuinely converted. He became a warm friend of Asbury, and we shall see him often in the course of his life.

These were stirring times. The battles around Boston had been fought, and the Continental army had been organized; the Declaration of Independence had been made; but Asbury in his journal makes no mention of these events as having taken place. He went on oblivious of everything but his work. The fact that Mr. Wesley had so unwisely intermeddled with the American matter, and written so sharply against the course of the colonies, and that so many of his preachers were Englishmen, made it a very disagreeable thing for Mr. Asbury to remain where he was exposed to suspicion, and at Nathan Perigau's he was fined £5 for preaching with-

Digitized by Microsoft®

out taking a license; but he went on his way, saying nothing on the great political questions of the day. He says that while riding along the highway, soaring out of the regions of his duty, he became inattentive to what immediately concerned him, and overset and badly broke his chaise. He could not get entirely well. The quartan ague that two years before had fixed itself on him, and the terrible putrid sore throat he had in New York, had so reduced him that he resolved to take a little respite from toil, and seek health; and as Mr. Gough and Mr. Merryman were going to the springs in Berkley, he went also.

There were a number of people at the springs, and at the cottages of Mr. Gough and Mr. Merryman they had services every evening. His stay at the springs was very profitable to him both in soul and body. He preached nearly every day, visited the sick, went to the German settlement nine miles away and preached to the Germans; read De Renty and Haliburton and Walsh and Brainerd; prayed a great deal, and found much comfort in his solitary musings; and after a two weeks' stay left Bath with the opinion that it was the worst and best place in which he had been: the best for health, the worst for religion.

He returned to his work in September. He preached at Bush Forest, Deer Creek, Nathan Perigau's, the Forks, Merryman's, Green's, and kept up his weekly appointments at the Point and in the city. His circuit was large, but he had two young helpers. Appointments in the city were sometimes filled by others, and the services seem to have been kept up regularly. Watch-night services were not

Digitized by Microsoft®

only held then, as they are now, at the going out of the old year and the coming in of the new, but were also held occasionally without reference to any particular time.

The seat of war was somewhat remote from Maryland, and while there was agitation there was little of actual disturbance. Mr. Asbury's companions, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Shadford, and Mr. Rodda, were pronounced Englishmen, and it is likely they sympathized with the mother country in the contest; at any rate, they determined to go back to England. Mr. Asbury had been longer in America than any of them, and if he did not sympathize with America he had no disposition to take sides against her nor to desert his flock, and could not make up his mind to go back, and so decided to remain. The Englishmen did not go back for the present, and, as Mr. Shadford was willing to take his place on the Baltimore Circuit, Asbury decided to go to Annapolis and begin a new work.

Annapolis was then, as it is now, the capital of Maryland, and was the seat of much elegance, and, alas! of much wickedness, and especially infidelity. He went to the city, and preached his first sermon at the widow D.'s, and then preached in an old playhouse used as a church. In and around Annapolis he preached with small success until the yearly Conference, which met in Deer Creek the 20th of May. This was the Conference at which the first note of serious discord was struck. The American preachers were restless under the condition of things, and, as they were largely in the majority, they were disposed to have the ordinances. Asbury and his Eng-

Digitized by Microsoft®

lish brethren recognized this as the beginning of division from the English Wesleyans, and they sternly opposed it. When the appointments were made, Mr. Asbury's name did not appear as having an appointment. Rodda and Shadford were appointed, and Mr. Rankin was general assistant. Mr. Asbury is mentioned as one of the assistants, but not otherwise. The Conference pledged itself to take no step to separate itself from the English brethren.

Why his name was left out has not been explained, but the fact was that Mr. Wesley had ordered Mr. Asbury to return to England, and he would not go. Mr. Rankin did not understand his colleague, and wrote freely, if not favorably, about him to Mr. Wesley, and Mr. Wesley said in a letter to Mr. Rankin: "I doubt not that you and brother Asbury will part friends. I shall hope to see him at the Conference. He is quite an upright man. I apprehend he will go through his work more cheerfully when he is within a little distance from me." And again: "I rejoice over honest Francis Asbury, and hope he will no more enter into temptation." Mr. Asbury could not take out a license to preach in Maryland without taking the oath, and he was not willing to do that; but the same thing was true of Shadford, and he was sent to Baltimore. As Mr. Rankin made the minute, it is likely that Mr. Asbury's name was left off by his authority.

Asbury went from the Conference to the circuit he had traveled before he went to Conference. He spent a little while at Gough's, and mentions that he had left off *his wig*. To us of this day the custom of cutting off the natural hair and wearing an un-

Digitized by Microsoft®

comfortable wig seems to rise to the height of absurdity; but even Mr. Asbury, who had great fear of the good women of society conforming to the world in their headdresses, wore his wig for five years after he came to America.

He had a rather unfruitful field around Annapolis. He preached at the widow D.'s, at Mr. H.'s, Mr. J. P.'s, the schoolhouse, South River, and Maggoty. The congregation in Annapolis sometimes amounted to fifty, chiefly women. He preached very earnestly, if not very successfully. Mr. Rankin and himself had their usual collisions about appointments, and at last, in September, Mr. Rodda and Mr. Rankin went home.

Mr. Asbury, in a letter to Joseph Benson, says: "Mr. Rankin was in favor of bringing the colonies into subjection at once." Mr. Rodda distributed the king's proclamation and ran away to the British fleet. Mr. Shadford and Mr. Asbury found matters getting too warm for their comfort. Mr. Shadford decided to go to England, and Mr. Asbury crossed the bay to the eastern shore early in January, 1778. Here, in Kent, he found his old friend Hinson, and saw that the seed he had sown when he came to Kent four years before had been fruitful, and there were flourishing societies now; but Maryland was not a safe refuge for him, and he went on to Delaware, where, near Dover, his old friend Thomas White had a home, and there he was gladly welcomed.

He never returned to Maryland for pastoral work. He next came as Mr. Wesley's assistant, and then as the Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER VIII.

1778.

Life in Delaware—Thomas White—Asbury's Studies—Stormy Times—The Conference at Leesburg—Asbury's Called Conference—Troubles in the Conferences—Asbury's Hard Condition—A Truce Made.

THE oath which was prescribed in Maryland, and which Asbury refused to take, was designed for those ministers who were suspected of secret sympathy with the king. The fine of £5, to which he alludes as collected three years before, was under the colonial law, and was laid on all unlicensed preachers. When he found, as he did early in 1778, that he must take an oath that he could not conscientiously take, he resolved quietly to withdraw from Maryland. Not far from Dover, in Delaware, lived a well-to-do farmer, Thomas White. He was judge of the county court, and was known as Judge White. He was a stanch Church-of-England man, and while he was not an enemy to the American cause he was not an active participant in the Revolution. He was a profoundly religious man, and was deeply attached to Asbury, who sought his home for seclusion. Here he remained for a part of three years, and had more time for study than at any other time in his life.

Mr. Asbury had found time to study Greek and Hebrew, but his journal does not tell us when. For several years after he came to America there is no mention of this fact, but now in the quietude of his

Digitized by Microsoft®

Delaware retreat he spends much time on the Greek Testament. He read the Testaments in Latin and Greek and the Old Testament Scriptures in Hebrew, and at Thomas White's home, and at that of Edward White, his brother, he now had his preaching places. It was dangerous to move about in Delaware at that time. J. Hartley had been arrested in Queen Anne county, Maryland, and imprisoned. Gatch had been assaulted and lost his eye, and Garrettson had been knocked from his horse, and shortly after this Thom-

White himself was arrested and carried to prison; and these were Americans, not Englishmen. Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Wesley had both rendered themselves obnoxious to the Americans by their course, and Mr. Asbury was Mr. Wesley's special representative. Mr. Asbury was afraid of no man; he seems never to have known what fear was; but he was afraid of reckless daring, and of refusing to heed the directions of Providence; and so he remained in seclusion, only preaching as he could get an opportunity. He had a good preaching place in the tobacco barn of Judge White, and while he did not leave his retreat to go any considerable distance, he preached somewhere nearly every day. He laid a plan for himself to travel and preach nine days in two weeks. He was constantly engaged in preaching or study, and especially in earnest spiritual exercises. He did not think he had secured that highest of earthly boons to him, perfect love, but he was groaning after it.

The Conference met in Leesburg, Virginia, May 19, and while it was in session Mr. Cox held a quarterly meeting in Judge White's barn in Delaware,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and Mr. Asbury preached. Mr. Asbury does not mention the Annual Conference in Virginia at all in his journal; but while he says nothing of it, it is evident that he was greatly concerned on account of the state of the Church. The young Americans who were now in control of the Conference were without a leader. Rankin was gone from America with all the English preachers except Asbury. Asbury had seen the temper of the young Americans at Deer Creek the year before, when, as he said in his letter to Shadford, he had been unable to resist the tide in favor of separation. Perhaps he had no special desire to go to Leesburg, and as he did not go, the Conference entirely ignored him. He was not mentioned at all in the minutes. It was evident to Asbury that matters were getting into a shape by no means pleasing to him, and he feared all the hard labor of these past years would come to naught. It was no time to discuss theories, he had to face a condition. He was the senior preacher on the continent. The Conference was entirely cut off from Mr. Wesley, and he decided as the senior to take an extraordinary step. He resolved to call a Conference of such preachers as were within his reach, and take control of it. The regular Conference had assembled, and had made provision for a separation. He believed that unless something was done separation was inevitable, and he determined, if possible, to prevent it. It is not my province to express opinions, but to state facts, yet one can do no less than say for Asbury that *he believed* he was not usurping authority, and that he was doing what Mr. Wesley wished; and in that be-

Digitized by Microsoft®

lief he was sustained by after facts, and his course had Mr. Wesley's full indorsement.

He wrote to his old friends Gatch, Dickins, and Dromgoole, urging them to interpose; and he called and took charge of a Conference in 1778. It is for the historian to give a full account of the little Conference, as Jesse Lee calls it. It recognized Asbury as chief pastor, and passed sundry resolutions, and proceeded as if it was the only ecclesiastical body among the Methodists.

The few brethren who met with him were willing to coöperate with him, and he gave them their appointments, took one for himself, and soon was hard at work. Though the war was going on, the revival in Delaware under Garrettson and others was truly wonderful. Asbury began now to venture out at greater distances from Judge White's, but he was still in seclusion and was diligent in the work of advancing his spiritual welfare. One cannot but regret his attention to a certain class of books which led him, always so distrustful of himself, to draw such invidious comparisons between himself and others. The lives of De Renty, Haliburton, and Walsh he seems to have read more than any other books but his Bible, and they had no little to do with the deep depression under which oftentimes he sank. He was, however, no recluse. Philip Cox, the preacher in charge, had quarterly meetings at which he was present that were much like the camp meetings of an after day. People came from Sussex, Somerset, Queen Anne, Kent, Newcastle in Delaware, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. Mr. McGaw, an Episcopal rector, adminis-

Digitized by Microsoft®

tered the sacraments, and there were six or seven hundred present. Mr. Asbury was an Episcopalian —he believed in bishops, and had no objection to prayer books. He says, September 10, 1779: "I began reading Camper on Ordination. Much pomp was annexed to the clerical order. Though plausible in its way, I believe the episcopal mode of ordination to be more proper than that of presbyters." To this view he always held. To get a view of his untiring toils we take the record of a few days.

On Sunday he says: "I went to a people I tried near two years ago in vain. Monday I read thirteen chapters in Revelation, a hundred pages in Camper on the Consecrating of Bishops, and fifty pages in Salmon's Grammar." "It is plain to me the devil will let us read always if we will not pray."

"Tuesday I read a few chapters in the New Testament and seventy pages in Salmon's Grammar.

"Wednesday, I am going up to Kent, and thence to Lewistown.

"Thursday, called at the widow Beauchamp's, who was sick but happy in the Lord."

Rode to Lewistown: "I rode thirty miles, and on my way called to hear an Episcopal minister. He was legal to all intents and purposes."

"Sunday, went to Lewistown, preached in the courthouse twice. Preached Monday at nine o'clock. Preached on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday." Never wearying, never ceasing, he was always at work.

These extracts are but samples of the entries in his journal when he was in retirement. No wonder he said he never did harder or better work at any

Digitized by Microsoft®

time than in these days of exile. Hartley, who had been licensed to preach when Asbury was in Virginia, and who had been imprisoned in Maryland for preaching, had yielded to the temptation to marry, and was wedded. The somewhat cynical Asbury says: "I find the care of a wife begins to humble my young friend, and makes him very teachable. I have always thought he carried great sail, but he will have ballast now." The part of Delaware where he was at work was very populous, and perhaps few spots of earth have been blessed with a more able ministry than this section of Maryland was at this time. Freeborn Garrettson, Philip Cox, Francis Asbury, and Mr. McGaw, the Episcopal minister who was the Devereux Jarratt of that state, were among the workers, and their success was great.

The Conference of the year 1779, which Mr. Asbury had called, had adjourned to meet in Baltimore in 1780, and Mr. Asbury was in charge of it when it met. Of no one thing was he more firmly convinced than that he and those who were with him were the only regular Methodists in America. He had resolved at first to cut loose entirely from the Virginia brethren, then he decided if they would comply with certain terms he would again affiliate with them. They had sent a peace commission, Gatch and Ellis, to Baltimore. Asbury offered them certain conditions, which they promptly rejected. He then proposed that the matter of administering be deferred a twelvemonth. They thought that might do, and Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters decided to go to Fluvanna, which they did. Here, after all hope of reconciliation seems to have been lost, while

Digitized by Microsoft®

Garrettson and Watters were praying, the noble Virginians decided to wait another year, and there was harmony. Mr. Asbury was recognized as general assistant, and began what was really his episcopal work.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER IX.

1781–1783.

General Assistant—Conference in Baltimore—Settlement of Troubles—Through the Valley of Virginia—Allusion to Strawbridge—Through Eastern Virginia—First Visit to North Carolina—His Friends Among the Episcopal Clergy—Visits New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey—Barratt's Chapel, 1784—Letter from Asbury to Shadford.

ASBURY began his journal for the year 1781 with this entry: "January 1, 2, 3, 4. Pain, pain, pain!" No wonder. He had been troubled again with his ulcerated throat, and took physic, and applied two blisters afterwards—put one on the back of his neck and another behind the ear; had some blood taken from his tongue and some from the arm. This was on December 31, 1780; but he was soon able, despite this medication, to go on his way, and did most earnest work around his home in Delaware. He now went into Pennsylvania, where he met that wonderful man, Benjamin Abbott, or, as he writes it, Benjamin Abbitt. He visited the Philadelphia society, and preached in Pennsylvania and Delaware until April, when he crossed the Chesapeake Bay, and rode to Mr. Gough's to meet the Baltimore Conference.

The Conference was to meet in Baltimore in May. Mr. Asbury determined to recognize none but those who stood with him on the old plan, as making the Conference.

During this year, 1781, according to the minutes,

Digitized by Microsoft®

there were two Conferences held—one at Choptank, April 16, 1781; the other at Baltimore, April 24. Mr. Asbury inserts the minute which recognizes the smaller Conference as the true one. He says, May 16: "After meeting, we rode about twenty miles to brother White's, where about twenty preachers met to hold a Conference." On the 24th he says: "Our Conference began at Baltimore, where several of the preachers attended from Virginia and North Carolina. All but one agreed to return to the old plan, and give up the administration of the ordinances. Our troubles seem to be over in that quarter. All was conducted in peace and love."

When this Conference met, a pledge was asked for from those who would preach old Methodist doctrine and discountenance a separation. There were thirty-nine who signed this pledge. "Why was this Conference begun at Choptank?" Say the minutes: "To examine those who could not go to Baltimore." "Is there any precedent for this in the economy of Methodism?" "Yes; Mr. Wesley generally holds a Conference in Ireland." As Choptank was only a few days' ride from Baltimore, and as all the preachers who were there were in all likelihood in Baltimore afterwards, the answer does not seem quite satisfactory. John Dickins would not submit, and he desisted from traveling, to come back some years afterwards and die in the work. This was the end of the trouble about ordination.

Asbury visited Martinsburg now for the first time. The beautiful section of Virginia known as the Valley of Virginia had been exposed to Indian forays until a very few years before this time, and had been

Digitized by Microsoft®

occupied by daring settlers of an entirely different class from those with whom Mr. Asbury had been associated in eastern Virginia and Maryland. Germans and Scotch-Irish people, intermixed with eastern Virginians who were willing to face perils, made the population. Much of the country was very rugged, and the forests were wild; but he says: "Although alone, I have blessed company, and sometimes think who so happy as myself." He found Methodists and a Methodist preacher even here. He says: "We had twelve miles to R.'s along a bushy, hilly road. A poor woman, with a little horse without a saddle, went with us up and down the hills; and when she came to the place appointed, the Lord met with and blessed her soul."

He now went southward along the south branch of the Potomac. "Blessed be God," he says, "for health and peace. We found some difficulty in crossing the Capon River. Three men very kindly carried us over in a canoe, and afterwards rode our horses over the stream without fee or reward. About five we reached W. R.'s. I laid me down to rest on a chest, and, using my clothes for a covering, slept pretty well. Here I found need of patience. The scenery was grand, though the roads were rough." He had, he says, about three hundred people to hear him, but there were many whisky-drinkers who brought with them so much of the powers of the devil that he had but little satisfaction in preaching.

He found even here a few who were striving to be entirely sanctified, and says: "It is hard for those to preach this doctrine who have not experimentally

Digitized by Microsoft®

attained it or are not striving with all their hearts to possess it." In these wilds he was reading Fletcher's Checks, which had been greatly blessed to him.

In crossing the mountains with William Partridge, they were overtaken by night, so they secured their horses to some trees and waited quietly till the return of the day. They slept among the rocks, though much annoyed by the gnats. In all this tour, when he was in a house, he was compelled to sleep on the floor every night, but was full of gratitude to God that he fared so well.

He reached Leesburg July 31st, crossed over into Maryland, and went to the quarterly meeting, preaching as he went. He makes a somewhat painful allusion, evidently to Strawbridge. He says: "Monday, September 2d, I visited the Bush Chapel. The people here once left us to follow another. Time was when the labor of their leader was made a blessing to them; but pride is a busy sin. He is no more. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the Lord took him away in judgment because he was in the way to do hurt to the cause, and that he saved him in mercy, because from his deathbed conversation he appears to have hope in his end."

One could wish this paragraph had not been written, and a partial biographer would be glad to expunge it; but an honest one cannot. Mr. Asbury was perhaps given to judging harshly those who did not see things as he saw them, and to attributing to them motives from which they were often free. Those who knew Strawbridge best had the highest confidence in him and respect for him, and his death was, according to Garrettson, a very peaceful and

Digitized by Microsoft®

happy one. Happy is he who can judge justly one who he thinks is in grave error!

Mr. Asbury was very busy visiting his old friends and the churches, and, under great weakness of body, preaching every day. He made a short visit to Philadelphia, and came into Delaware again, and once more came into Baltimore. While things in Virginia were not so bad as he feared, yet there was need for him, if he would stamp out this spirit of separation, to go there as speedily as possible; and so at the close of this year he went into Virginia again.

In January, 1782, Mr. Asbury again entered Virginia and worked with all ardor to suppress the spirit which clamored for the ordinances. His indomitable will had nearly crushed it out, but still there was to be another Conference of the disaffected at Manakintown. He believed this would be the last struggle of a yielding party, but the yielding party in two years' time was the victorious one so far as the main issue was concerned. He rode into King George county to Stedham's. Stedham had been a famous racer in those days, but now he was the servant of Jesus Christ, and had given up his race horses. In October, 1781, the surrender at Yorktown had taken place, and Mr. Asbury was now in the midst of the desolations caused by the war. He says: "We find the smallpox and camp fever raging, and heard of several poor creatures, white and black, that had died on the road. Ah! we little know what belongs to war, and with all its train of evils, churches converted into hospitals and barracks, homes pillaged or burned." He rode to Mr. Jarratt's, below Petersburg, and met him again.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The influence of Mr. Jarratt over Mr. Asbury was manifestly very great, and it is quite evident that Mr. Asbury had a hope that the evangelical party of the Established Church and the Methodists would in some way coalesce, and that all the Episcopalians in the southern provinces would become Methodists while all continued to be Episcopalians. The nature of the situation, for which the party that Mr. Asbury was so sternly opposing was trying to provide a remedy, is seen when he says in the entry: "Mr. Jarratt baptized A. C., one of our young preachers." He went on his way from Jarratt's through Sussex and Nansemond, and preached at Ellis's; went to Lane's and Mabry's; met his good friend Dromgoole, in Mecklenburg, and passed again into North Carolina and into the upper counties of that state, and then recrossed the line into Virginia. He says: "In that country I have to lodge half my nights in lofts where light may be seen through a hundred places, and it may be the cold wind at the same time blowing through as many, but through mercy I am kept from murmuring." He was at that time most earnest in preaching on sanctification; and while he makes no positive statement with regard to his own experience he says many things which would lead one to suppose that he claimed, if he did not profess, a grace he so constantly pressed upon others; and yet after saying one day, "My soul resteth in God from day to day and from moment to moment," a week later he says: "I have been much tried in various ways. I feel myself greatly humbled. This morning I poured out my soul to God in the granary, and was refreshed in my spirit."

Digitized by Microsoft®

He was hard at work trying to bring all the preachers who had been disaffected to harmonize with him in his views about the ordinances, and he had succeeded most wonderfully up to this time, and now Philip Bruce and James O'Kelly also were reconciled to him. Mr. Jarratt was in full accord with Asbury in all these measures, and was ready to coöperate with him, and attended the Conference at Ellis's meetinghouse and preached; and as soon as it was over, Mr. Asbury preached at Mr. Jarratt's barn.

Asbury, with his determined will and admirable management, had now checked, if he had not completely crushed out, the movement toward independency in Virginia; but it is evident from his after course that he knew the matter was merely in suspense, and that the old plan was only to be adhered to until Mr. Wesley could be heard from; and after results showed that even when Mr. Wesley was heard from the preachers were not disposed to blindly follow his directions. The preachers at the Conference, however, all signed the agreement, both at Ellis's and afterwards at Baltimore, agreeing to wait, and there was now concord.

Asbury now made a visit to the western shore, to Calvert county, Maryland. This is the first mention of his visitation to this part of Maryland, where Methodism won such conquests in after time. It was a secluded peninsula on the western shore, inhabited by English people of simple tastes and warm hearts. From the western shore he went to Leesburg, Va., and made another journey through the northern part of what was then Virginia and what is now West Virginia. He rode sixty miles over incredibly bad

Digitized by Microsoft®

roads in two days, and preached in Shepherdstown to about two hundred people. He returned to Maryland, and then went to Pennsylvania; then to Delaware and into East Virginia, and down through the war-desolated sections of the tide-water country, where he ended the year 1782. He was in constant motion, and in the first part of 1783 he made a very extensive tour through the upper part of North Carolina. He passed through Salem and went down as far south as Guilford, then back to Caswell, and then turned his face toward the eastern part of North Carolina, where he made another visit to Green Hill, "at whose house he preached," he said, "to a proud and prayerless people;" and it was while on this tour he heard the rumor of peace between England and America.

The *de facto* bishop had established his lines, and now extended them across the mountains into Holston, and all over upper North Carolina and Virginia, and Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Whenever it was practicable he had made a circuit and found a preacher for it, until now there were thirty-seven circuits and nearly fourteen thousand members. He now had his hands full, as he made a yearly visitation to all parts of the work. His circuit began at New York, and took in New Jersey, the eastern parts of Pennsylvania, Delaware, the eastern shore of Virginia and Maryland, and all of the then settled parts of Virginia, and along the northern part of North Carolina. He was still trying to keep on good terms with the Episcopal clergy, and Mr. Jarratt, Dr. McGaw, and Mr. Pettigrew were his special friends. But his hope that by making

Digitized by Microsoft®

concessions he might secure something of the same nature from the Established Church seems to have been a baseless one. After the Conference he went as usual to the western border, preaching in Shepherdstown and Winchester, and during the hot weather of early August went into Pennsylvania. Here he heard of the sad death of Isaac Rollins, whom he had ten years before introduced into the ministry which Rollins had so shamefully disgraced. There is perhaps no comfort to us in these latter days in finding out that the early preachers were not all saints, and learning that of the four earliest American preachers Abram Whitworth and Isaac Rollins became apostates, and, alas! that the gifted and zealous Joseph Cromwell, having done most excellent work, fell into grievous drunkenness and died and made no sign. The demands which Asbury made upon those who were associated with him were perhaps sometimes too great for weak men, and perhaps he was sometimes mistaken in the moral stamina of those whose zeal was so ardent. He visited Philadelphia, where after the war all things were prosperous but religion, and came again to New York. He had persuaded John Dickins to leave North Carolina, and take charge of the church in New York, which came out of the Revolution even stronger than when it went into it. He now visited him, and preached earnestly to the people, and went again into the eastern shore of Maryland, and into Virginia and along the old route he had traveled the year before and traveled so often afterwards. He went into North Carolina, where he received the Lord's Supper from Mr. Pettigrew, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

received a letter from Mr. Wesley appointing him to a work he had been doing for four years. Again he pressed through the middle counties of North Carolina, and was sadly disappointed because he could not reach the Yadkin Circuit once more; but an inflamed foot kept him from it, and it was by the aid of a stick that he could limp to the barn and the stable. The Tar River Circuit, in Granville and Warren, was very populous and was then in a prosperous state. He found the people numerous; the congregations in all the southern section of Virginia and the northern counties of North Carolina largely attended. He attended the two Conferences, one at Ellis's and one at Baltimore, and found that poor, half-crazy William Glendenning was beginning a fight against him, which he kept up for years.

The Conference of 1784 over, he turned his face again toward the newly-settled Valley of Virginia and the borders of northwestern Virginia, where he says they were three thick on the floor. He went into western Pennsylvania, and in July was in Philadelphia. He went as far north as New York, and met his old friend William Lupton. This portly merchant, who had given him some trouble, was still alive, and despite the war the society was still prosperous. He was in New York in August, and possibly learned something of what was designed in England by Mr. Wesley, but got only an inkling. He came southward, preaching as he came, and after passing through the eastern shore of Virginia he made a circuit and reached Barratt's Chapel in Maryland, where he met Dr. Coke, in November, 1784; and his next tour was as Bishop Asbury.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Stevens gives a letter from him to Shadford which throws some light on these times:*

"Long has been thy absence," he says, "and many, many have been my thoughts about thee, and my trials and consolations in loving and gaining friends. We have about fourteen thousand members, and between seventy and eighty traveling preachers, and between thirty and forty circuits. Four clergymen have behaved themselves friendly in attending quarterly meetings, and recommending us by word and letter. They are Mr. Jarratt in Virginia, as you know; Mr. Pettigrew, North Carolina; Dr. McGaw, Philadelphia; and Mr. Ogden, of East Jersey. You have heard of the divisions about that improper question proposed at Deer Creek Conference: 'What shall be done about the ordinances?' You know we stood foot by foot to oppose it. I cannot tell you what I suffered in this affair. However, God has brought good out of evil, and it has so cured them that I think there will never be anything formidable in that way again. I hope if any preachers are to come over here at any future day, you will be one. I admire the simplicity of our preachers. I do not think there has appeared another such company of young, devoted men. The gospel has taken a universal spread. You have heard what great things God has done in the Peninsula since about these eighteen months that I thought it most prudent to stay in Delaware, and an exceeding great work we have had there, and on the eastern shore of Maryland, so that my labors were not in vain. Since I have been ranging through Virginia toward the Al-

*Stevens's History of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Digitized by Microsoft®

leghany and Maryland, Pennsylvania and East and West Jerseys and the Peninsula, I enjoy more health than I have for twenty years back. I travel four thousand miles in a year, all weathers, among rich and poor, Dutch and English. O, my dear Shadford, it would take a month to write out and speak what I want you to know. The most momentous is my constant communion with God as my God."

He wrote to Wesley near the same time, and said of North Carolina: "The present preachers suffer much, being often obliged to dwell in dirty cabins, to sleep in poor beds. My soul is daily fed, and I have abundant sweetness in God. I see the necessity of preaching a full and present salvation from all sin."

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER X.

1784.

Dr. Coke—Mr. Wesley's Will—Mr. Asbury Refuses to be Ordained Till a Conference is Called—The Conference Meets—Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke Elected Bishops and Called Superintendents.

WHEN Mr. Asbury rode up to Barratt's Chapel on Sunday morning, November 14, 1784, he found in this chapel in the forest a great crowd of people assembled. When he entered the church he saw in the pulpit a clergyman in his gown. He was a small man with feminine features, long hair, and a hooked nose. He had never seen him before, but he knew he was Thomas Coke, LL.D., Mr. Wesley's favorite lieutenant. The thin-visaged Thomas Vasey and the doctor he had not known, but the serene-looking Whatcoat, who was with them, he had known before in England. Dr. Coke came from the pulpit as the sunburned, sturdy traveler came in whom he rightly conjectured to be the man he had come to find, and embraced him warmly. The service was concluded with the communion, and to Mr. Asbury's astonishment his old friend Whatcoat assisted the clergyman in handing around the elements. Mr. Asbury was not taken entirely by surprise, and the meeting was not accidental. When he was in New York a short time before he had learned from John Dickins something of what was designed; but now in an interview with

Digitized by Microsoft®

Dr. Coke the whole plan of Mr. Wesley was opened before him.

I have with design confined myself as closely as I could to my office as Mr. Asbury's biographer, and have not allowed the temptation to turn to other closely connected subjects to influence me; and I shall not do so now, but will leave to those who write the histories of Methodism, or who feel it incumbent on them to defend Mr. Wesley's position, and to put his theory of Church government in its true place, to do so. I am simply to give Mr. Asbury's part in the transaction. When they had now gone to the home of their host, Dr. Coke laid before Mr. Asbury the matter in hand. The facts brought out seem to be that Mr. Wesley had decided that he had a right to ordain not only deacons and elders, but superintendents or bishops for his societies; that he had selected Dr. Coke to be one of the superintendents of the American societies, and ordained him to the office; that he had selected Francis Asbury to be joint superintendent with Dr. Coke, and Dr. Coke had been commissioned to ordain him deacon, elder, and superintendent; and that he had sent Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders and subordinate assistants to Mr. Asbury.

The doctor said he was now ready to go forward and carry out Mr. Wesley's orders, and he presented to Mr. Asbury Mr. Wesley's letter, with which letter all the students of Methodist history are familiar. Mr. Wesley gives in it the reason why he exercised a right which he believed was legitimately his, and why he did in America what he had not done in England.

Digitized by Microsoft®

In Dr. Tigert's Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism, in Stevens's History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in Bangs, in McTyeire, the whole story of this affair is given, and there is an able defense of the propriety of Mr. Wesley's course, but with that we have little to do in this biography.

Mr. Asbury says when he heard why they had come to America he was shocked; and well he might have been, for a greater change of position was rarely demanded of anyone than that he was required to make. I think it is certain that the Church of England did not have in it a more loyal member than Mr. Asbury was. He was an Episcopalian of the Wesleyan type, and not Charles Wesley himself was more attached to the Establishment than he was. With sacramentarianism, or high-churchism, he had no sympathy, but he loved the Church of Burnet and Tillotson. He had no liking for Presbyterians or Congregationalists. He believed there were three orders—bishops, elders, and deacons; and while he was as evangelical in his theology as Bunyan or Flavel, he was, as far as his views of Church government were concerned, thoroughly an Episcopalian. When his young brethren in Virginia had broken away from the old traditions and were determined to exercise the right to administer the sacraments, almost single-handed he had withstood them and won the field; and now he was startled by a proposition that he who would not even administer the sacrament of baptism, because he was not ordained by a bishop, should consent to take ordination as a bishop. He was not at all misled by the use of what

Digitized by Microsoft®

seemed to be the less offensive term of superintendent, instead of bishop. He knew well that he was to do in America all that a bishop did in England; and while he might not have the name, he certainly was to have the office, of a bishop.

Mr. Asbury had now the whole plan laid before him. A Church was to be organized, orders were to be given, sacraments were to be administered, a liturgy was to be used, and articles of faith were to be accepted. It was only necessary for him to say aye, and Dr. Coke would lay his hands upon him. Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey would remain with him as elders, and he would continue to do the work he had been doing, and add to it the office of ordaining. *But he did not say aye.* He was willing to do all asked of him, provided his brethren said so, and nothing unless they did say so; and more than this, with his consent Dr. Coke could not exercise his Wesley-conferred function unless they said so, and a Conference must be called.

Mr. Wesley had not designed this. He was not accustomed to consult his helpers They were to keep his rules, not to mend them; but there was no time to consult Mr. Wesley, and Dr. Coke yielded, and that saintly young man, Freeborn Garrettson, who had done such wonderful work in Delaware, was sent like an arrow from a bow through Virginia to call the preachers to meet in Baltimore on Christmas day for consultation.

Mr. Asbury gave up his traveling companion, Black Harry, to Dr. Coke; and while Dr. Coke went one way he went another, and a week before the time for the preachers to report he and Dr. Coke

Digitized by Microsoft®

and sundry others met at Perry Hall. Here there was a free consultation, and on Friday, the 24th day of December, the preachers who could be gathered together met in Lovely Lane meetinghouse in Baltimore, in which the good stewards had had backs put to the benches and placed a stove. The Conference was tenacious of its rights, but not unwilling to regard, as far as possible, all Mr. Wesley's wishes. They were not willing to accept bishops or liturgies or declarations of faith at his dictation, but were willing to adopt his suggestions; and so they settled all things as he wished by a majority vote, and unanimously elected Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke to the superintendency, accepted the service-book provided, and did sundry other things at Dr. Coke's suggestion. William Philip Otterbein, of whom we have had mention, a German-Reformed preacher, joined with Dr. Coke, Mr. Whatcoat, and Mr. Vasey, and Francis Asbury was set apart first as deacon, then as elder, and then as superintendent, and for two years was Mr. Superintendent Asbury. For two years he was known by the people as Bishop Asbury, and appeared in the minutes as superintendent; and then the silly tribute to high-church prejudice was paid no longer, and Superintendent Asbury became Bishop Asbury in name as he was in fact.

NOTE.—It has been impossible to verify all the statements made in this important chapter by referring to the section of the journal, page and paragraph; but the facts as I have given them are so presented at length in the journal of 1784, which can be consulted.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XI.

1784.

Mr. Asbury's Views on Episcopacy.

THIS is perhaps the proper place to give Mr. Asbury's views concerning the episcopal office with which he had been invested. In this chapter I shall aim rather to state his views than to defend them, and in doing this I shall make no effort to fit them into any theory of Church government whatsoever.

Mr. Wesley said a bishop and an elder were the same order. So said Dr. Coke, but Mr. Asbury held to the three orders as decidedly as the judicious Hooker. He writes explicitly on this subject in his journal after he had been a bishop for some years. In April, 1801, he writes: "I recollect having read some years since Ostervald's Christian Theology, and wishing to transcribe a few sentences, I met with it and extracted from Chapter II., page 317, what follows: 'Yet it cannot be denied that in the primitive Church there was always a president who presided over others who were in a state of equality with himself. This is clearly proved by the catalogue of bishops to be found in Eusebius and others. In them we may see the names of the bishops belonging to the principal Churches, many of whom were ordained while the apostles, especially John, were still living.' So far Mr. Ostervald was, I presume, a Presbyterian. In Cave's Life of the Fa-

Digitized by Microsoft®

thers and in the writings of the ancients it will appear that the churches of Alexandria and elsewhere had large congregations of many elders, that the apostles might appoint or ordain bishops. Mr. Ostervald, who it appears is a candid and well-informed man, has gone as far as could be expected from a Presbyterian. For myself I see but a hair's breadth difference between the sentiments of the learned author of the Christian Theology and the practice of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There is not, nor indeed to my mind can there be, a perfect equality between a constant president and those over whom he always presides."

Bishop Asbury does not here enter into any discussion as to the manner in which bishops are made, but concerns himself with the position they occupy. The question which interested him was not how came he a bishop, but, as he was one, what were his prerogatives; but a little later he says: "I will tell the world what I rest my authority on: First, divine authority; second, seniority in America; third, the election of the General Conference; fourth, my ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbein (German Presbyterian minister), Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey; fifth, because the signs of an apostle have been seen in me." He was no lord over the heritage. He was not self-appointed, nor did he, as he once had done, exercise rule because Mr. Wesley had chosen him to do so. He was the servant of his brethren, but the office they conferred on him required him to command, and the authority they gave him was almost absolute, limited only by the conscience of the chosen commander. No pope

Digitized by Microsoft®

ever claimed a more unlimited power than Bishop Asbury claimed, but it was conferred for public good, and could have been withheld. As the black pope, the head of the Jesuits, has but to speak and he is obeyed, so Asbury expected those who had made him commanding general to heed his orders. He claimed no superiority save that which was of office, and an office given, and he would gladly have resigned it at any time if it had been possible. While he was bishop he realized the responsibility of his position and tried to meet it. The Asburyan episcopacy, as it is sometimes called, is more fully set forth in his letter to Bishop McKendree, written at a late period of his life, but is substantially the one I have given. The letter is too long to be inserted here. It was dictated to Thomas Mason, and was written in 1813. It is somewhat rambling and incoherent, and evidences the decay of his mental powers. The reader can find it in full in Paine's Life of McKendree, Vol. I., p. 310. It is made up largely of extracts from Haweis's Church History. In it he states the position which he held. There were three orders—the bishop, the elder, the deacon. The bishop was the successor of the apostles. The apostolic order of things, which was that of a traveling superintendency, was lost in the first century. Mr. Wesley ordained Dr. Coke, and Dr. Coke ordained him. Mr. Wesley was ordained by two bishops, deacon and elder, and had an apostolic right to ordain also. The apostolic order was lost in fifty years after the death of the apostles, and we must restore it. The regular order of succession was in John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, Richard Whatcoat,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and William McKendree. It is needless to follow this rambling letter to its close. He believed that he was a legitimate successor of the apostles, and his utterances rather indicate that he thought the Methodist bishop alone was that successor. But he held as decidedly to the opinion that he was only a bishop or superintendent of his brethren, because they, by their selection of him, conferred that office on him. These are his views.

While he felt as fully as any pope ever did that he was called of God to the office of bishop, he recognized the fact that he had been placed in this position by the suffrages of his brethren. "For myself," he says, "I pity those who cannot distinguish between a pope of Rome and an old worn man of sixty years who has the power given him of riding five thousand miles a year, at a salary of eighty dollars, through summer's heat and winter's cold; traveling in all weathers, preaching in all places; his best covering from rain often but a blanket; the surest sharpener of his wit hunger, from fasts voluntary and involuntary; his best fare for six months of the twelve coarse kindness; and his reward from too many suspicion, envy, and murmurings all around. He says he felt the great responsibility of his office, and would have been glad to have surrendered it if he could have done so. He was always very sensitive, and the intimation that he was partial to men and sections in the discharge of his office gave him great pain. The careful itinerary his journal gives shows how he labored to meet the demand for the oversight of every section of the land.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XII.

Thomas Coke—The Welsh Gentleman—In Oxford—Coke's Curacy—His Conversion—Mr. Wesley's Favor—His Labors—His Death.

THE President of the Christmas Conference of 1784 was Thomas Coke, LL.D. He was a Welshman by birth, and was born thirty-seven years before this time, the only child of a family of wealth and position in the province from which he came. He began his university studies in Oxford in his seventeenth year. John Wesley had founded his first Methodist society in London, ten years before Coke's birth, and Methodism was a strong and healthy plant when he entered on his Oxford life. He was a handsome boy, and, living in ease and affluence, he became very frivolous and fond of the ordinary amusements of those days, especially of dancing. Oxford was the university to which wealthy and titled Tories sent their sons; and the pure though irreligious young Welshman found himself in a hotbed of vice and, of course, of infidelity. He soon became infected with the virus of unbelief, and, boy as he was, gave up the faith. Although he was the boon companion of the dissipated, he did not fall into their grosser vices; and while he indulged in wine, he never ran into great excess, and though fond of cards, he did not game deeply. He was very unhappy in the midst of this gayety. At this time he was visited by a clergyman from his

Digitized by Microsoft®

native province. He heard him preach, and was impressed. When he spoke to the clergyman of his sermon, however, he was shocked to hear from his lips an avowal of entire disbelief in the Christianity he was defending. This course so disgusted the high-toned young Welshman that he began to examine the evidences of the Christian religion, and so became theoretically a Christian. In studying the subject of regeneration he became satisfied that he had not received the new nature. He resolved to seek it, and in the meantime gave himself with great assiduity to his studies, and improved rapidly. He left Oxford before he was twenty-one, and was soon elevated to an important position in his borough. He resolved to enter into holy orders, and, naturally ambitious, he expected a high place. He took orders, and, seeking for the worldly rewards of his office, he lost sight of his religious needs; after being disappointed in his expectations of rapid promotion, he took a curacy in the charming county of Somersetshire, in the center of England. Here he preached with great earnestness; and without compunction, when he found a better sermon than his own, following Sir Roger's advice, he used the one he found; but now he became convicted under his own preaching, and began to preach with real earnestness the great necessity of the new birth. His church became crowded, and he built a gallery at his own expense. He was at once accused of being a Methodist, which was the one term of odium given to anyone who preached as he did.

Thomas Maxfield, Mr. Wesley's first lay preacher, who left him in the great excitement on the subject of Perfection in London, in 1763, was now an or-

Digitized by Microsoft®

dained clergyman. He was not far from Dr. Coke, and he sought him out. His conversation aroused Coke still more, and that stirring book, Alleine's Alarm, fairly awakened him. He was yet undecided on the Calvinistic question, which was stirring the evangelical world. A clergyman handed him Mr. Fletcher's Checks. This settled his doubts on this question. An interview with a friendly clergyman among the dissenters brought him on his way; but he was led to clear and correct views by a pious rustic and a class leader. He had now found the way of life intellectually, and he began to preach as he had never done before, and work with an ardor which told how deeply he was in earnest for the souls of his people. A few days after the interview with the laborer, peace came to his soul. He told others of it. He laid aside his manuscript and preached with divine unction. Few things give formalists of any name greater offense than professions of a deeper experience than they know, and few things were more unendurable in such a parish as the average one in England then was than religion in the curate. They could tolerate a little gaming, a little too much wine, and all such minor matters; but for him to have religion, and to urge it upon others, was another thing, and was unpardonable: and so Dr. Coke was dismissed from the curacy, and the bells rang him out of the parish.

He was educated, wealthy, and not yet thirty years old, a stanch churchman and an earnest Christian; he heard that Mr. Wesley was to be in twenty miles of him, and he rode to meet him. Mr. Wesley was now an old man (seventy-four years old), and his heart warmed toward this brave young cler-

Digitized by Microsoft®

gyman. He invited him to meet the preachers at Bristol, and from this time to his death Thomas Coke was Mr. Wesley's bosom friend. His expulsion from his parish took place after the Methodist societies had outlived their days of weakness and persecution; and when Dr. Coke appeared in London, crowds came to hear him. Following Mr. Wesley's example, he preached in the fields, and great success followed his ministry everywhere.

Mr. Wesley had long needed an assistant in his episcopal work. His brother Charles had left him to bear the burden alone. Mr. Fletcher, who he had hoped would succeed him, was unwilling to take the position. Here Mr. Wesley thought was the man he had been seeking and praying for. So he received the zealous young doctor, and gave him the warmest affection and confidence; and so Coke entered into the connection. He came to America, as we have seen, and entered earnestly into the work before him. He found simple-hearted Francis Asbury trying to build up a high school for Methodist boys at Abingdon, Maryland. He decided at once on a college to be called Cokesbury, after himself and Asbury. The scheme was about as sensible as Whitefield's college in Savannah; but at it he went with all zeal. He made all the plans; he set to work to raise the funds; raised enough to start the affair, and then left poor Asbury to do the rest, and went back to England. The rules of the school were drawn up by him, and were about as practicable as the constitution John Locke gave to the South Carolina colony, or the measures of James Oglethorpe in Georgia's early settlement. Happily and mercifully, the schoolhouse was burned down, and Cokes-

Digitized by Microsoft®

bury, Maryland, with its impracticable rules, passed away from the earth, much to Mr. Asbury's relief.

Coke had been about a month in America when he began a crusade against slavery. The preachers were all agreed about the matter. It was an evil to be put down. Asbury had been doing his best to put it down, and so had the preachers; but now the little doctor was going to beard the lion in his den. He would have an act passed at Baltimore, and put it into effect on his first tour, which would extirpate the crying evil; and much good he did, to be sure. He was going to kill or to cure; but the preachers would not let him kill, and certain it is he did not cure.

The good doctor was now a bishop, and had as sincere a desire to do the Church good service as ever man had. He had spoken out in no uncertain tones at Baltimore, and was imprudent enough to say things which, while they pleased the Methodists and the Republicans in America, were not at all pleasant to Church people and the Tories of England, sore enough over the loss of the colonies. He now began his tour through Virginia. The warm-hearted people received him as an angel; but before he had been among them many weeks he made the fiercest assault against slavery, and aroused no small amount of displeasure. His biographer thinks that he was in danger of bodily harm, and just escaped—well, he escaped all bad treatment, and thus had better fare than he had in his English parish. But the Virginians were glad to see him go back to England. He was a brave, unselfish man, and like a hero faced the many dangers of the American traveler in fording and swimming streams, and sometimes made

Digitized by Microsoft®

very narrow escapes in this way. The Methodist preachers in England were in no very good humor with him; and even Mr. Wesley, who had a very dim vision when the faults of his favorites were to be searched for, received him very coldly on his return to England, and his name was left off the minutes for the year. He now began his great missionary work by securing some missionaries for Nova Scotia. He took his collections for these missionaries, and even then opened a correspondence with reference to a mission in Hindoostan; and this desire then expressed, to reach India with the gospel, lingered with him to the last. This was four years before Carey. He now secured three missionaries for Nova Scotia, and set sail from England; but there was never smooth sailing for the good doctor, and there was a stormy voyage this time. When a fierce storm came on and continued, the superstitious sailors, somewhat angered already, were about to throw him overboard as a Jonah, and he barely escaped. At last they landed in the West Indies, instead of Nova Scotia.

Methodism had been introduced into these islands by a slave owner, Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert, and Dr. Coke found some societies and a missionary already there. He did good work on the island on which he landed; and, leaving Mr. Hammett behind him, he took shipping for Charleston, in South Carolina. He did not receive a very cordial greeting from his American brethren, and when he reached Virginia again he found the people much exasperated at his plain dealing. He saw that he was doing neither slaves nor masters any good by his course, and he desisted from it. He could not be still nor remain

Digitized by Microsoft®

in one place; so he returned to England and Ireland. He swept over England; then preached in the Isle of Jersey; then came again to the West Indies; and was the next year once more in Charleston. The second Conference in the state of Georgia, at that time the southern frontier of the United States, was to be held in Wilkes county. It was to be reached only on horseback; and so, leaving Charleston, he began his journey through the wilderness; and, after over a hundred miles through pine woods and swamps, he reached the higher and better lands of South Carolina, where great crowds were gathered to hear a real bishop and a doctor of laws. He found a vigorous young Conference in Georgia; and, as usual, enterprising some great scheme, he set on foot the Wesley and Whitefield College of Georgia, which never became an institution. Tobacco was the Georgia staple then, and twelve thousand five hundred pounds of tobacco, worth £500, was subscribed for the school. The doctor, now wise from experience, let social questions alone. He remained in America this time nearly six months, and then he crossed the sea again. He was nominally a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, but he was really the missionary bishop of all Methodism. This restless, devoted, heroic man felt that there was no man for whom Christ had not died, and no man Christ could not save. Mr. Wesley said that the world was his parish, yet England and Ireland gave him all he could do; but Dr. Coke found the British empire too small a field for his enterprise. So, after a few months in England, he returned again to America. As a bishop he was not a very pleasant man to an

Digitized by Microsoft®

American Conference. He had his views, and did not expect others, especially the backwoods preachers of America, to have theirs; and as he did but little of the work in America, they insisted on holding their way and holding their opinions. While really valuing the good doctor, they refused to be ruled by him; and at last they told him that he might stay in England if it suited him best.

Mr. Wesley died while Coke was in America, and he hurried back to England. The Wesleyan preachers there never felt very cordially toward him. They thought his aim in returning was perhaps to take Mr. Wesley's place. This is very doubtful; but if he did, little he made of it.

Not satisfied with his great work in supervising missions and being Bishop of America, the good doctor now prepared a commentary. He did not take time to make it short, and drew largely upon Dr. Dodd's work. The Conference refused to print the folios, but he published it on his own account. After spending some fifty thousand dollars on it, and having a world of trouble out of it, he sold out to the Conference on a long time for fifteen thousand dollars, and retired from book printing. He was rich, he married rich, and gave away all he had. He enterprised a mission in Africa, which failed; and at last, at his own expense, fitted out a mission to Ceylon. On his way there he died. They buried him in the sea, and its waves never sung their requiem over a nobler soul.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIII.

1785.

The New Bishop—Tour Southward—Henry Willis—Jesse Lee—Visits Charleston, S. C.—Edgar Wells—Journey Northward—Cokesbury College—Visit to Mount Vernon—Corner Stone of College Laid.

WHEN the Conference of 1784 ended, Bishop Asbury at once began his journey to the south. He rode through central Virginia, where he found Henry Willis, who had not attended the Christmas Conference. He ordained him a deacon and an elder, and took him with him on his journey. In two weeks he was in central North Carolina, and mentions as stopping places Thompson's, Short's, Fisher's River, Witherspoon's, Elsbury, and Salisbury. Here at Salisbury he met Jesse Lee, who had not been at the Christmas Conference. The new bishop preached at Salisbury, and used the liturgy and wore the gown and bands. Jesse Lee had had enough of liturgies and gowns in his Virginia bringing up, and he gave the new bishop his mind on this subject, and as far as we know the gown and bands vanished forever, to the gratification of American Methodists. Jesse Lee was to go with the bishop to Charleston, and the big-bodied, big-brained, big-hearted Virginian was just the companion the somewhat gloomy bishop needed, and he says that he was greatly comforted by brother Lee's company. Asbury, Willis, and Lee made their way to Georgetown, where William Wayne, nephew of Mad Anthony

Digitized by Microsoft®

Wayne, received them into his home and heartily entertained them. They rode into Charleston a few days afterwards, but not to find themselves entirely among strangers. A Mr. Edgar Wells, who was a merchant there, to whom Mr. Willis was commended by Mr. Wayne, now welcomed the three evangelists to his home, and entertained them while there. They found themselves in the largest city south of Philadelphia. There were of Christian denominations: "The Church" people, who had two churches, St. Michael's and St. Philip's; the Independents, the Huguenots, the Baptists, one each. In the lower part of the city, near the bay, there was an old Baptist church, which had been perhaps one of the first churches built in the city, and being abandoned by the Baptists, it was secured by Mr. Wells as a preaching place. Charleston was now nearly one hundred years old. Peculiar advantages of location made it a most important city. The back country for hundreds of miles sent its products here for sale, and the people bought here their supplies. There was a large number of slaves on the Sea Islands and rice plantations near by. These negroes do not seem to have had any special attention religiously till Asbury began his work among them. Among the white population there was much laxity of morals and much formality in religion. It evinced the daring character of Asbury's ministry that he should have fastened his eye on Charleston with a determination to establish Methodism there, and while its success in this city has not been remarkable as compared to some other places, it has been won over perhaps greater difficulties than in

Digitized by Microsoft®

any other city on the eastern coast. The new bishop preached every day for a week. Jesse Lee remained with him and helped him both by preaching and singing for a few days. The strangers attracted a considerable amount of attention, and at least one person was converted, and he was worth the journey. It was their host, Mr. Edgar Wells. A society was formed and Methodism was established in Charleston. After laying the foundation for the future, he left Charleston and made his way along the eastern border of South Carolina to Wilmington, in North Carolina. It was a somewhat important commercial town, and Asbury says: "We went to ——, but he was not prepared to receive us; afterwards to ——, where we had a crowd of merry, singing, drunken raftsmen. To this merriment I soon put a stop. I felt the power of the devil here. The bell went round to give notice of preaching, and I preached to a large congregation. When I had done, behold F. Hill came into the room powdered off, with a number of ladies and gentlemen. As I could not get my horse and bags, I heard him out. I verily believe his sermon was his own, it was so much like his conversation." He does not say who F. Hill was, nor where he had met him before, but he was probably a relative of Green Hill. He rode to meet the Conference at Green Hill's.

We cannot get a very satisfactory view of this Conference. We know it met at Green Hill's, in eastern North Carolina, and that he entertained the entire body. He was a large slaveholder, a wealthy planter, and a local Methodist preacher. Dr. Coke was with Asbury, and Asbury simply remarks: "Here we held our Conference in great peace." Who

Digitized by Microsoft®

were present we do not know, but at this Conference new work was laid out. The saintly John Tunnell was sent to Charleston. The distant settlements on the Holston and on the Yadkin, as well as the thickly-settled counties of Halifax, Rowan, Caswell, and Guilford, and the New River, Tar River, and Roanoke River settlements, were provided with preachers. At this Conference we find the first mention of presiding elders. Richard Ivey, Reuben Ellis, and Henry Willis were made "president elders," as Bishop Asbury called them. Asbury had a military mind, and his organization of forces was complete. The bishop first, then the elder, the preacher in charge, the junior preacher, the local preacher, the class leader; there was supervision from the top to the bottom. The selection of certain men as subbishops, which was begun now, was not done without a certain amount of opposition.

This Conference was merely the assembling of a few preachers, called together by the bishop, at a place chosen by him for the convenience of the preachers. The Conference, as it was called, met now in sections, but no section was authorized to do anything of a general nature until the other sections were consulted and had agreed to it. Dr. Coke was with him at this Conference, and he and Asbury began their journey together to Baltimore, but parted company, and Asbury rode through eastern Virginia. On the way he passed through Yorktown. He says the inhabitants were dissolute and careless, but he preached to a few serious women at one o'clock, and by request to the ladies again at four. He crossed the York and Rappahannock rivers and went into the Northern Neck. The first settlements of a

Digitized by Microsoft®

new country are naturally along the water ways, and when land is cheap and easily secured it is natural that large bodies should be taken up by the first settlers and large fortunes should be the result; and thus it was in this tide-water country. The country between the Rappahannock and the Potomac was very fertile, and for over a hundred years had been settled by Englishmen. Those who lived in it were among the wealthiest and most aristocratic in Virginia. From these people came the Lees, the Washingtons, the Masons, and others who have been distinguished in the councils of Virginia. Across the Potomac from there was the western shore of Maryland, where the first Catholic settlements had been made. Asbury says at Hoe's Ferry he found the people wretchedly wicked. He paid a dollar for ferriage, and left them and rode to Alexandria. Here he joined Dr. Coke, and together they called on General Washington at his home at Mount Vernon, and asked him to sign a petition to the assembly of Virginia, which they were circulating, for the immediate abolition of slavery. The general received them very courteously, invited them to dine with him, and gave them his views about slavery, and then refused to sign their petition. They took their departure that afternoon, and, as far as I can find any record, that was the first and last and only time Bishop Asbury was ever in Mount Vernon, Dr. Strickland to the contrary notwithstanding.

When Mr. Asbury met John Dickins in North Carolina, at Dickins's suggestion he resolved to attempt a school like the Kingswood School in England, which he felt was much needed; but when Dr. Coke came and heard of the plan, he was taken with the

Digitized by Microsoft®

idea of a college—a real Methodist college, the first in the world. The history of this ill-fated Cokesbury College belongs largely to annals of the Methodist historian; suffice it to say that after Dr. Coke, who knew all about colleges, had made his plans on a sufficiently extensive scale, he went back to England to meet his astonished and indignant brethren of the connection there, and left poor Asbury to bear the burden of carrying them out. Asbury was not well, but he rode up to Abingdon and preached the foundation sermon of Cokesbury College. The only biographer of Asbury, Strickland, evidently draws upon his fancy for a picture which Stevens reproduces in his history. If there is any proof that Asbury was attired in a long gown, with flowing bands, I have not been able to find it. The incident is like some of the other things, related by his biographer, given more to add picturesqueness to a somewhat prosy story than because it was a fact known to be true. We would fain hope that after the vestments disappeared at Salisbury they never came forth again. What the home of Ebenezer Blackwell was to Wesley, so was the home of Gough to Asbury. He always turned his footsteps thitherward after his long journeys, and paused longer here in his ceaseless travel than he did anywhere else. He rested less than a week, however, and then went into a German settlement in Maryland, near Sharpsburg. He rode by his favorite watering place, Bath, in Berkley, up the south branch of the Potomac, and after a dreary ride came to Morgantown, Virginia, and returned to the springs, where he spent nearly a week nursing his sick throat.

Then through the broiling sun in August he came

Digitized by Microsoft®

to Baltimore, where he had an attack of fever which kept him two weeks in bed at Perry Hall. While he was sick here his dear friend Mrs. Chamier died. From Asbury's account of the attendance at her funeral service, and other allusions to her, she seems to have been a gentlewoman of deep piety. He was able to creep from his sick bed, and performed the funeral rites and preached to about a thousand people, and two days afterwards set off to Philadelphia. He made a flying trip to New York, where his old friends supplied his needs, and then started southward again. He bought a light jersey wagon in New Jersey, but after trying to use it a few weeks he went back to his sulky again, and continued his journey southward.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIV.

1786.

Asbury's Second Episcopal Tour—Hanover, Virginia—North Carolina—Sinclair Capers—Charleston—Hope Hull—John Dickins and the Revised Discipline—Central North Carolina—The Baltimore Conference—The Valley of Virginia—Religious Experience at Bath—Return Southward.

IN Virginia, on his way, Asbury's throat became inflamed, and he had to lie by at the widow Chamberlayne's, in Hanover county. She was very kind, and being a somewhat skillful leech, and withal a motherly woman, she put him on his feet again in a short time. He had a rheumatic affection of one of his feet, and was led to reflect upon the dark providence. To those who read the story of his exposure and toils, his long fasts and exhausting labors, the providence which called a halt by a severe twinge of pain does not seem so dark.

He went now into North Carolina. He was on the eastern shore, riding parallel with the coast. The rains had been very heavy, and the whole country was under water, but they floundered on. He says they toiled over swampy routes and crazy bridges until they arrived at New Berne, then the capital of North Carolina, where the assembly was in session. He sailed down to Beaufort, where the people were very kind, but had little religion. The journey overland was largely through a dreary waste until they reached Georgetown. Here the

Digitized by Microsoft®

faithful Willis met them, and these were cheered to see on the way the frame for a preaching house going up. On this journey he stopped at the home of S. Capers. This was Sinclair Capers, the uncle of William Capers. He was a well-to-do rice-planter, converted under the ministry of Henry Willis, and was one of Asbury's earliest and warmest friends.

On the 13th of January he came again into Charleston, where he rested a few days, then turned his face to the northwest, and went with labor, but without anything of special interest, into North Carolina. At Salisbury he met the preachers and spent three days in the Conference. One of these, Hope Hull, he speaks of as "a smooth-tongued, pretty speaker, that promises fair for future usefulness." The promise was not belied, for he was in after time a power for good. We shall see him often as Asbury's cherished helper, whether in the itinerant or local ranks. He was from the eastern shore of Maryland, and had spent his last years in Georgia, where he was a leading man in Church and State. The bishop rode through the central parts of North Carolina, and was not at all pleased with the state of affairs. In Hillsboro he found things so discouraging that he resolved to come no more till they were bettered. John Dickins, who was now married, and had returned from New York to North Carolina, had been aiding Asbury in getting the Discipline ready for the press. Dickins, who had been at Eton, was at that time the most scholarly man in the connection. He had been so opposed to Asbury's course, when he resisted the preachers who worked to separate the societies from the Established Church, that he desisted from traveling, and it was

Digitized by Microsoft®

evident from his course then that the sturdy Englishman had little use for the English establishment, and little disposition to keep on good terms with it; and it is probable that the change of the name of Asbury's office in the Discipline from superintendent to bishop was at his instance. He had good literary taste, and was the first book agent in the connection. The country along Asbury's route, although perhaps the oldest part of central North Carolina, was by no means prosperous, and it was somewhat difficult to get good food or tolerable lodgings, and the religious condition of things was not flourishing; but when he crossed over into Virginia he found things in a very lively state. The Conference was held at Lane's, and there were some spirits which were tried, he said, before it ended. There were, however, ten new probationers added to the preaching-force. His journals, never full, are exceedingly barren here, and we know but little of what occurred. He went on northward, and at Alexandria, where he preached in the courthouse, he drew a plan and set on foot a subscription for a meetinghouse.

The Baltimore Conference was to be held at Abingdon, Maryland, where the new college was located. He found it now only ready for the roof, but a debt of nine hundred dollars hung over it. It was never free from debt, and he was never free from worry as long as it stood. Money was scarce, and yet he must beg. The good brethren in Baltimore had built a new meetinghouse, and on Light street the congregation, which had worshiped in Lovely Lane, a few blocks away, were now in better quarters. Asbury preached for them twice on Sunday,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and Whatcoat held a watch-night with them on Tuesday night.

In the west of Maryland there was a large settlement of Germans, and he preached at Antietam, where, nearly a century afterwards, the Confederate and Federal armies met in hostile combat. He then crossed the Potomac, and entered into the northern part of the Valley of Virginia. He preached in a grove in Winchester, and went on to Newtown, where he met Otterbein, with whom he consulted about the formation of the Church of the United Brethren. Asbury was lame and weary, and the country was new and rough. The section of western Maryland and west Virginia and Pennsylvania was then being peopled by new settlers, and Asbury was always with the advanced guard. He rode out to Coxe's fort on the Ohio River and then into the lower counties of Pennsylvania. He had ridden one hundred and fifty miles on as bad roads as any he had seen on the continent. He had now reached the point from which he started southward on his first tour, and in July he went to the waters at Bath, in Berkley, and as he had no appointment for three weeks he resolved to spend the time recruiting in Bath; but he was not willing to be idle, and he preached every other night and spent his days of solitude in much prayer.

Several times in his life he hoped that wondrous change for which he had sought and prayed, when all sinful tendencies would be destroyed, had come; but then he doubted, and gave up his confidence and sought again, and now he says: "A pleasing thought passed through my mind; it was this: that I was saved from the remains of sin." He now

Digitized by Microsoft®
3687474

went northward, and worn and weary he reached New York. He was sick, and for eight days was in bed, but as soon as he was able to travel he started for the south, and made his usual tour through the eastern shore, and then came again to the troublesome college. It had now cost ten thousand dollars, and was ready for a president. Mr. Wesley had recommended a Mr. Heath, and he was put in charge, and then Asbury began his journey southward. The family from which Mary Washington came, the Balls, lived in Lancaster county, and one of the wealthy and aristocratic Balls, a widow, had become a Methodist. "A lady," said Asbury, "came by craft and took her from her house, and with tears, threats, and entreaties urged her to desist from receiving the preachers and Methodist preaching; and all in vain." This most excellent woman was for a long time the stanch friend and warm supporter of Asbury.

Coming through Gloucester, York, and preaching as he went, he came to Portsmouth, joined Francis Poythress, waded the Dismal Swamp and along the eastern shore of North and South Carolina, and at last, in March of 1787, reached Charleston, where he joined Dr. Coke once more.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XV.

1787.

The Tour of the Two Bishops—Dr. Coke Again—The Blue Meetinghouse in Charleston—Prosperity of the Work in South Carolina and Georgia—Central South Carolina—Journey Northward—Virginia Conference—Baltimore Conference—Dr. Coke in Trouble—The New Discipline—Mr. Wesley's Displeasure—Effort to Appoint a Bishop—Failure.

THE journals of Asbury are for the most part mere memoranda of comparatively uninteresting events. They show us the bishop flitting from place to place, but say little of what he did, save that he preached; and we are dependent upon other sources for a knowledge of times and places and men.

Dr. Coke had made a rapid tour through a part of the country immediately after he was made a bishop, in which he had done many unwise things in his anxiety to abolish what he thought was the great evil of slavery, and had gone back to England. After two rather stormy years there he returned to America, coming by the West Indies, where he had done some valuable work. He was to meet Bishop Asbury in Charleston. The plucky little congregation of white Methodists there, assisted by the large body of negro members, had built a commodious and unpretentious wooden church in the lower part of Charleston, known for a long time as the Blue Meetinghouse, and afterwards as the Cumberland-street Church. This was the largest church south of Baltimore; and while there were not twenty-five white members in the so-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ciety, the church was self-sustaining, as all the churches were of necessity forced to be in those days.

Asbury's plans for advancing the work in the section which was in the South Carolina Conference had been very wise and successful. The states of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia were included in this Conference. There was an arrangement of the entire work by which the great circuits touched each other from Virginia to Georgia. The historians of Methodism have had much to say of the faithful companions of Asbury and of their doings, and to them we must leave all else than an account of those men and that work with which the good bishop was immediately connected.

The eastern parts of North Carolina and South Carolina near the ocean had been settled nearly a hundred years, but the central and western parts of both of these states, and much of the most desirable portions, had only been settled some thirty or forty years. They had been rapidly peopled by a motley body of Protestants—Germans, Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and pure Irish—and since the Revolutionary War very many families had removed from Virginia and Maryland into South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina, and people from these states were now moving continually to these newly-opened and fertile fields.

As soon as the South Carolina Conference was over, Asbury and Coke began their journey to the Virginia Conference. They went directly to Camden, and thence through the pine woods to North Carolina, and without adventure rapidly rode across

Digitized by Microsoft®

the state to Charlotte county, Virginia, where, at the residence of William White, the preachers of middle and lower Virginia were called to Conference.

Bishop Coke, who had his ideas of an episcopacy drawn from his English training, could not divest himself of the idea that he was a prelate, and while he was in England he had of his own will changed the time and place of the meeting of the Conferences after they had been fixed. He was astonished at the dissatisfaction which was manifested, and manifested very decidedly in the Conferences he met. There was a very large crowd present in this then new country; three thousand were supposed to be assembled. As soon as the Virginia Conference was over, the two bishops hurried to the Baltimore Conference, which met in Baltimore the next week. They reached the city on Monday, and on Tuesday the Conference met. It was evident that there was a storm brewing. The doctor was nettled at the prospect, and when Nelson Reed was making his protest, Coke said: "You must think you are my equals." "Yes, sir," said the intrepid Marylander, "we do; and we are not only the equals of Dr. Coke, but of Dr. Coke's king."

The impetuous little doctor was as ready to yield when he was wrong as he was to assert his authority, and so he signed a very humble statement that while he was out of America he would exercise no government over the American churches, and while he was in it he would simply preside at Conferences, ordain according to law, and travel at large.

Asbury simply says: "We had some warm and close debates at Conference, but all ended in love and peace."

The two bishops went together to New York, Bish-

Digitized by Microsoft®

op Coke doing all the preaching, Asbury silent from necessity, for his throat was in bad condition. When he was able, he began to preach again, and now in the city, now in the country, he was at work. In New York he met the leaders and trustees, and after some explanation, "*settled* matters" relative to singing in public worship. If he settled them then, they have become sadly unsettled since that time. He went to New Rochelle, and found it as it was sixteen years before, when he was on the New York Circuit. "If there is no change," he says, "I will trouble them no more."

He says "his body was weak, his soul peaceful, and he had power over all sin." For the first time in his ministry he went up the Hudson as far as West Point. He merely surveyed the field, and then turned his face southward again through northern New Jersey to Philadelphia, through northern Maryland and to the springs at Bath.

The Discipline, upon which he and John Dickins had been at work the year before, was now published. In the Discipline of 1784, adopted by the Christmas Conference, the second question was as follows: "What can be done in order to the future union of the Methodists?" Answer: "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready in all matters belonging to Church government to obey his commands." This second question and answer were left out of the Discipline in 1787, and to add to the offensiveness of this act to Mr. Wesley the two superintendents were called bishops.

The publication of the Discipline, with the changes made in it, was not the only ground of offense which

Digitized by Microsoft®

Mr. Asbury gave Mr. Wesley. He was known by Mr. Wesley to be the ruling spirit in the connection. Mr. Wesley had never been willing to surrender any part of the power with which he honestly believed he had been divinely invested, and he had no idea of giving up his control of the American societies to Mr. Asbury or anyone else. So he sent them, through Dr. Coke, peremptory orders to ordain Mr. Whatcoat a bishop, which the Conference as peremptorily refused to do. They had introduced into the minutes the binding minute in 1784, by which he understood that they bound themselves to do what they now positively refused to do, and now to prevent any further misunderstanding they simply repealed the minute, and left off the name of Mr. Wesley. Of course, Mr. Asbury incurred all the blame for their action.*

Dr. Coke was silly enough to say in his funeral sermon on Mr. Wesley that this act of discourtesy from the Conference hastened Mr. Wesley's death. The Conference did not intend to leave Mr. Wesley in any doubt of where it stood, and while it may not have been pleasant for him to know it, yet that it had the effect which Dr. Coke intimated was not at all probable.

Mr. Vasey, who came over with Dr. Coke, was so offended that he obtained ordination from Bishop White, and said very bitter things of Bishop Asbury. He retracted them afterwards, but returned to England, and by Mr. Wesley's consent obtained a

*Mr. Asbury said that it was James O'Kelly who defeated Mr. Wesley's aim in appointing Whatcoat, and the Baltimore Conference repealed the binding minute.

Digitized by Microsoft®

curacy, and afterwards came back into the English Wesleyan connection, in which he died. This act of Mr. Asbury in changing the wording of the Discipline was concurred in by Dr. Coke, but was much to the displeasure of Mr. Wesley, who some time after wrote a very sharp and somewhat indignant letter to Mr. Asbury, to which we will hereafter refer.

Asbury had so outlined the work that the filling in was comparatively easy. A wonderful response to the call for laborers enabled him to provide workers for these new fields. In every direction he was establishing outposts, and by his admirable military system he was having each detachment of the army properly officered, and under his own eye.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVI.

1788.

Charleston Again—Riot—Georgia—Holston—Greenbrier—Conference at Uniontown, Pennsylvania—College Troubles.

AFTER Dr. Coke returned to England, Asbury came south, passing through the western shore counties of Maryland, which he said was the only part of the state unoccupied by the Methodists. He then crossed the Potomac, rode through the Northern Neck of Virginia and the tide-water counties of North and South Carolina until he reached Charleston again. The Conference session was not a long one, but long enough to arouse certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. Asbury says: "On Sunday morning the house was crowded, and there were many at the door. A man made a riot near it, and an alarm at once took place. The ladies leaped out of the windows, and a dreadful confusion ensued." Again he says: "While I was speaking at night a stone was thrown against the north side of the church, another on the south, a third came through the pulpit window and struck near me inside the pulpit." But he adds: "Upon the whole, I have had more liberty to speak in Charleston on this visit than I ever did before, and am of the opinion that God will work here, but our friends are afraid of the cross." As he came through Virginia he heard from Philip Cox of the wonderful revival in Sussex county, Virginia, in which Cox said he thought not less than fourteen hundred people had been converted, and John Eas-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ter wrote him that he thought there was a still larger number in Brunswick. These statements would appear incredible to us if we failed to remember how thick was the rural population of those counties at that time, and how destitute the people had been of evangelical preaching before the itinerant evangelists had come among them. Methodism was not now new in this section, and as the number of preachers increased it had been able to enter hitherto unentered fields, and had secured a large body of clerical and lay workers to till them.

The effort to advance the work had led to the appointment in 1786 of John Major and Thomas Humphreys to Georgia, and now Asbury went to the first Conference in that state. It was held in the forks of Broad River, probably near the home of James Marks, one of Asbury's old Virginia friends who had removed to Georgia.

After the session of the Conference Asbury passed through the foothills and mountains of North Carolina. His aim was now to go into the Holston country. He had held the Georgia Conference in the early part of April, and, crossing the Savannah River into South Carolina, he came on into western North Carolina and into the Yadkin country, and there he and his companions had their horses shod, preparatory to a hard ride across the mountains of North Carolina into what is now Johnson county, Tennessee. He crossed three ranges of mountains: the first he called steel, the second stone, the third iron. He and his companions were moving northward toward General Russell's, whose home was where Saltville now is. The trail (for it was nothing more) led across the head waters of the Watauga

Digitized by Microsoft®

River. The country was almost entirely unsettled, and there was a terrific thunder storm while they were on their way. They found a dirty house, where the filth might have been taken from the floor with a spade, and sought shelter in it. They could not get wood to kindle a fire, but managed to get through the night, and the next day they reached the head waters of the Watauga, and fed, and reached Ward's that night. When they reached the river the next day, the preachers crossed in a canoe, swimming their horses beside it; and in order to avoid high water they took an old trail through the mountains. Night came on in the wild, and, with a severe headache, he pressed on toward Greer's. In answer to prayer his head was eased and his fever abated, and at nine o'clock he reached Greer's; and set out the next day to find Cox's, on one of the branches of the Holston River. The road was through a wood; he had two horses, one to carry his baggage and one to ride, and the weary packhorse, delighted with the rich herbage along his way, would neither lead nor drive. If he was prevented from grazing by tying his head up, he ran back; and if he was permitted to graze, he would not follow. The good bishop was not a little tried. He crossed the north fork of the Holston and met Tunnell in Washington county, and together they went to where Saltville now is.

In one of the most picturesque valleys of southwestern Virginia is the village of Saltville, where for over a hundred years a wonderful spring has furnished its saline waters for the kettle. Here General William Campbell had brought his bonnie bride, the sister of Patrick Henry, and when he died General Russell had wedded her. They lived here

Digitized by Microsoft®

in great comfort. John Tunnell had found a home at this hospitable house, and now Bishop Asbury and his companion were welcomed to it. The bishop preached on Sunday, and on Tuesday he went to Easley's, on the Holston, thence to K.'s. He entered East Tennessee, probably about where Bristol is, and went on to Owens's, where the delegation from Kentucky met him. He came to a place he calls "Half Acres and Key Woods," and held his Conference with the few preachers that were in the Holston country and that had come from Kentucky to meet him. Tennessee was the rather rebellious daughter of North Carolina, and was now trying to set up the new state of Franklin, and there was civil war; however, Asbury did not allow this to disturb him, but made this brief visit, and then returned to General Russell's, where he again received his rested horse, and began his journey through upper North Carolina eastward. This was his first visit to the Holston country.

He made his way as far south as Greensboro, North Carolina, and thence northward to Petersburg, Virginia, where the Virginia Conference met. After its adjournment he began his journey to a hitherto unvisited section—the Greenbrier country, in the present West Virginia.

General Assistant Asbury had some years before sent missionaries to the beautiful country which lies beyond the Alleghany Mountains in Virginia. It had been only a few years since the land had been freed from the dangers of Indian invasion, and it had now been settled by an enterprising, sturdy race of Scotch-Irish and German people. The pure English element was very small, but German and Scotch-

Digitized by Microsoft®

Irish Protestants — generally Presbyterians or Lutherans—were in numbers. They found themselves away from pastors and churches; living in remote sections widely separated from each other, with no churches built nor even schoolhouses established, they were without clerical care. The circuit preacher had found them out, and began a work in an apparently unfriendly soil, which brought forth a large harvest. One of the first churches west of the Alleghanies had been built in what was then called Greenbrier county. It was called Rehoboth. This church still stands, or rather its successor which bears its name, in what is now Monroe county, West Virginia.

To this remote part of Greenbrier Bishop Asbury and Richard Whatcoat now came. The bishop was to hold a quarterly meeting there. His faithful colaborer, Le Roy Cole, was on the district, and John Smith, a young preacher, was on the circuit. Bishop Asbury and his companion left Lynchburg, and passed westward through Buckingham, Bedford, and Botetourt into Greenbrier. His journal merely states the fact that the journey was made, but says nothing of the toil of making it; and one must know something of the old trail to the west through Fincastle, of the mountains which were to be climbed, and the long rides through almost unpeopled wilds, before he can appreciate the labors of the bishop in making the journey a hundred years ago. He simply says: "Heavy rains, bad roads, straying bewildered in the woods: through all these I worried. I had a high fever, and was otherwise distressed in body and ill at ease in mind." He preached as he went, and was the first American bishop of any name

Digitized by Microsoft®

who was ever seen in this remote section of Virginia. At last he crossed the great Alleghany range, but by no means passed out of the mountains; his entire journey, after he entered them, was up and down from one mountain to another. He makes little complaint. He merely says the journey was made, and that after preaching at Rehoboth he started northward. His aim was to reach Clarksburg, which was in northwestern Virginia, and to do this he had to ride over the wildest mountains in the state.

The beautiful prairies, or savannas as they were called, were covered with rich native grass, and many cattle were fattened on these plains; and while the country was new, yet in these valleys there were settlers whose humble homes were opened to Asbury and his companions. The travelers rode from what is now Monroe county into the Great Levels, as the rich Greenbrier valley is called, and crossed a mountain range into the Little Levels, a fertile valley in what is now Pocahontas county. Here the McNiels, a family of Scotch-Irish people who had become Methodists, had their comfortable homes, and Asbury mentions them in his journal. The descendants of these people still live in their old homes, and the home which sheltered Asbury and McKendree was still standing a few years ago.

After leaving this valley, he started to Clarksburg, entering Tigert's valley, which he calls "Tyger's Valley." He says: "We came to an old forsaken habitation. Here our horses grazed while we boiled our meat; at midnight we brought up at Jones's. At four in the morning we journeyed on through devious, lonely wilds, where no food might be found, except what grew in the woods or was carried with us. We

Digitized by Microsoft®

met two women going to quarterly meeting at Clarksburg. Near midnight we stopped at A.'s, who hissed his dogs at us, but the women were determined to get to the quarterly meeting, and so we went in. Our supper was tea; brothers Phoebus and Cook took to the woods. Old —— gave up his bed to the women; I lay along the floor, on a few deer skins, with the fleas. That night our poor horses got no corn, and the next morning they had to swim the Monongahela. After a twenty miles' ride we came to Clarksburg, but we were so outdone it took us ten hours to accomplish it."

The journey he made led him through Pocahontas, Webster, Braxton, Lewis, and Harrison counties. At Clarksburg he lodged with Colonel Jackson. This Colonel Jackson was the grandfather of "Stonewall" Jackson, the great general.

The Baptists were in these mountains before the Methodists came, and had a long, close room in which the Methodists held their Conference. There were seven hundred persons present to attend the quarterly meeting.

The journey was resumed on Monday, and it was still through the mountains. "Oh, how glad I should be [he says] of plain, clean plank as preferable to most of the beds! and where the beds are in a bad state, the floors are worse." The gnats were as bad as mosquitoes, and the wild frontiersmen were hardly acquainted with the decencies of life. "They had been fighting Indians [Asbury said] till it made them cruel, and then the only preaching they heard was the hyper-Calvinism of Antinomians. Good moralists they are not, and good Christians they cannot be till they are better taught."

Digitized by Microsoft®

He preached in Morgantown, and after riding for two days reached Uniontown, Pennsylvania, where the Conference met.

The journey he had made from North Carolina to Pennsylvania had led him almost entirely through the frontier settlements, and much of it through wild mountains, many of which at the present time are as wild as they were when he passed through them. The people were then as wild as the mountains, and the preachers he had sent out to evangelize them were exposed to every trial; and he was willing, in order to save them from long journeys to Conference, to expose himself to the fatigue and privation of this weary tour.

Richard Whatcoat was his traveling companion, and the journey had made both ill. They, however, returned to Virginia, and stopped a little while at Bath. There he tried to preach a sermon on "The Lame and Blind." "The discourse," he said, "was lame, and the people were blind."

The college, so unwisely begun, had given him almost as much care as Kingswood School gave Mr. Wesley, and now at Bath he heard that both the teachers were gone.

During this journey, rough as it was, he had been busy reading Mosheim, a book which one would not likely take for reading on the wing. He went from Bath to Baltimore, where he met the Maryland preachers in September, 1788. The view he gives of the Conference is a pleasing one. The old Light-street church was now completed, and Conference met in it. The Dutch church of Mr. Otterbein was also at the service of the Conference. There began on Sunday a gracious revival, and sinners cried for

Digitized by Microsoft®

mercy, and perhaps twenty souls were converted before the meeting closed on Tuesday. The puzzling college affairs were settled as best they could be, and he began his northward journey again.

In three days he was in Philadelphia, and the Conference for the eastern part of Pennsylvania and New Jersey was attended to, and he began his move southward. On the eastern shore of Maryland and Virginia, and through Delaware, he preached in great feebleness and weariness, but with great power and earnestness, finding a gracious revival influence wherever he went. He was troubled about college debts, but his friends helped him out, and, visiting Cokesbury, he tried to put things in order in the college, and then rode through the western shore of Maryland into Virginia, and by his old route to Charleston, South Carolina, once more.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVII.

1789.

Mr. Wesley's Famous Letter and the Council—Georgia—Daniel Grant—Wesley and Whitefield School—Mr. Wesley's Letter—North Carolina—The Council.

BISHOP ASBURY had perhaps delayed his coming to the south in 1789 because he expected to meet Dr. Coke in Charleston; but when he reached there Coke had not arrived, and a few days after he began his journey to Georgia. He had gone only a short distance, however, before Coke joined him. He had reached Charleston a few hours after Asbury left. They crossed the Savannah River at Sand-bar Ferry and rode on by the old road to Washington and to Grant's, where the Conference was to be held.

Daniel Grant was the descendant of an old Scotch family. He was a man of good culture for those times, and of profound piety. He had at one time been a Presbyterian elder in Hanover county, Virginia, in the church of Samuel Davies, and afterwards lived in Granville county, North Carolina, where he had been an elder in the Grassy Creek church. Thence he had removed to Georgia. When he heard the Methodists, he invited them to his house to preach, and finally joined them and built a church, the first Methodist church in Georgia. His son, Thomas, had become a member of the Church also, and lived near him. They carried on a large mercantile business at Grant's Store, in Wilkes

Digitized by Microsoft®

county, and being well off in the world's goods, they were able to dispense a generous hospitality. The Conference met at their house and held its sessions in the church near by. Mr. Asbury approved the scheme which some of the preachers had made for a Methodist school in Georgia. This was to be called the Wesley and Whitefield School, and the scheme was to buy five hundred acres of land and establish the school and get donations of land for its endowment. Bishop Coke, who was with Asbury, seconded the idea with great heartiness, and a subscription was started. The subscriptions were to be paid in cattle or land or tobacco or money. In the county of Wilkes there were, besides Grant's, Meriwether's and Scott's meetinghouses which Asbury mentions. David Meriwether had become a Methodist. He belonged to a distinguished and wealthy Virginia family who had been, as far as they were anything, Church-of-England people; he was the first Methodist among them. The bishops had, however, no time for a tour through Georgia, and pressed on to South Carolina. They rode the two hundred miles to Charleston in four days.

Here Asbury received a letter from Mr. Wesley, the last he ever had from his pen. He says of it: "Here I received a bitter pill from one of my greatest friends. Praise the Lord for my trials also! May they be sanctified." This letter has been often paraded by those who had little love for Mr. Wesley as a means of rebuking the pretensions of those for whom they had still less. It was written by an old man eighty-six years old, and written to one whom he regarded almost as his child. It can only be excused because of this fact. The charge that As-

Digitized by Microsoft®

bury was striving to make himself great, because he strove to keep himself from being ridiculous, was only to be passed by since a somewhat childish old man made it. If Mr. Wesley had not designed to make Mr. Asbury a bishop, what had he designed? If he had not believed he was an episcopos himself, why had he acted as one? Perhaps next to God, Asbury venerated Mr. Wesley, and yet he had been misread by him time and again. We, however, give the letter just as it was:

London, September 20, 1788.

There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relations wherein you stand to the Americans and the relations wherein I stand to all Methodists. You are the elder brother of the American Methodists: I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore, I naturally care for you all in a manner no other person can do. Therefore, I, in a measure, provide for you all; for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he could not provide were it not for me—were it not that I not only permit him to collect, but also support him in so doing. But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little; you study to be great. I creep; you strut along. I found a school; you a college! Nay, and call it after your own names! O, beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and "Christ be all in all!"

One instance of this, of your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a *bishop*. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a fell end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better. Thus, my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart. And let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely I am

Your affectionate friend and brother,

John Wesley.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The letter pained him, but did not cause him to abate his work, for as soon as the Conference ended its session he was on his way again.

He went northward to North Carolina, where, at McKnight's, in a month's time he was to have another Conference, and by the 3d of April he had ridden three hundred miles, and the poor horses had suffered because of it. They reached McKnight's on the Yadkin, and the Holston brethren met with them, and their next stop was in Petersburg Virginia. Asbury allowed Bishop Coke to do all the preaching. On one Sunday, having no appointment, they pushed on until they reached Leesburg. They found a lively religious state all along the way through Virginia and Maryland, and when they reached Baltimore "the meetings were very lively," he says, "and one night the people continued together till three o'clock in the morning; many have professed to be convicted, converted, sanctified."

It would be monotonous to follow him in his wanderings the remainder of this year. They covered very much the same ground that he had been over before, and were amid much the same scenes. His heart was greatly cheered by the great revival which he found everywhere, and much to his pleasure there was much noise in it. "Noble shouting" delighted his heroic heart. He was now trying to raise money to keep the needy at the schools and raising the first educational collection.

It had been now nearly five years since the Christmas Conference which organized the Methodist Episcopal Church had held its session and adjourned, and there had been no general meeting of

Digitized by Microsoft®

the preachers. In order to do anything it was necessary to pass the measure round among the Conferences, and the veto of one could defeat the will of the rest. Bishop Asbury did not see the need of a General Conference, nor possibly of any more legislation, but he felt the need of a general body of advisers, and he proposed the formation of a council, which should be composed of the men of his choice, and they were to be invested with almost plenary powers. He hoped the Conferences would accede to his plan, and the council was selected and called together. They were among the best men he had, and he thought the plan would be eminently satisfactory to his brethren; and he was now hurrying to Baltimore to be at the first session of this celebrated and shortlived council.

Bishop Asbury says, December 6, 1789: "Our council was seated, consisting of the following persons, namely: Richard Ivey, from Georgia; R. Ellis, E. Morris, Phil Bruce, James O'Kelly, L. Green, Nelson Reed, I. Everett, John Dickins, J. O. Cromwell, Freeborn Garrettson. All our business was done in love and unanimity." He was highly pleased with the result of his experiment, and he had certainly shown good judgment in the selection of the conclave.

This was the beginning of the council. The legalizing of this conclave and defining its powers were dependent upon what the Conferences would say. There was little question in the mind of Bishop Asbury that the plan he had devised would be accepted, but he heard the mutterings of the storm before the council had adjourned its session many weeks. That dear man, James O'Kelly, who had ris-

Digitized by Microsoft®

en from his bed at midnight to pray for Asbury when they first met, and who had been made a member of the council, did not like the trend of things; and Asbury says on the 12th of January, 1790: "I received a letter from the presiding elder of this district, James O'Kelly. He makes heavy complaints of my power, and bids me stop for one year or he must use his influence against me. Power! power! there is not a vote given in a Conference in which the presiding elder has not greatly the advantage of me. All the influence I am to gain over a company of young men in a district must be done in three weeks. The greater part of them are perhaps seen by me alone at Conference, while the presiding elder has been with them all the year and has the greatest opportunity of gaining influence. This advantage may be abused. Let the bishops look to it. But who has the power to lay an embargo on me and to make of none effect the decision of all the Conferences of the union?" The battle was now on. O'Kelly wrote Coke and presented his side of the case, and in the meantime Asbury used his personal influence to secure the indorsement of the Conferences. When the council met in Philip Rogers's house it coolly resolved that "it had the right to manage the temporal concerns of the Church and college decisively, and to recommend to the Conferences for ratification whatever we judged might be advantageous to the spiritual well-being of the whole body." This was certainly a rather sweeping proposition from a body whose hold on life was so frail, but at the Virginia Conference it received its deathblow, and the General Conference was called for, to meet in Baltimore in 1792.

Digitized by Microsoft®

I have preferred to interrupt the current of the story and give the whole history of this matter as Asbury's journal gives it. He had conceived the idea of the council and had selected the best men of the Church to form it, but he says comparatively little about it, and the general minutes make no men tion at all of its origin, its beginning, or of its ending. The various Church histories give its history *in extenso*. It no doubt originated with Bishop Asbury, and was designed to supersede the necessity for the calling of a General Conference. Mr. Asbury did not have great confidence in the *vox populi* even among the preachers. He thought he knew best what ought to be done, and while he was not unwilling to take advice if he thought it good, he was anxious to select those whose duty it would be to give it. The council was well designed, but it had in it the seeds of death, and it had but two unsatisfactory sessions. In order to meet the convenience of the preachers, they had been acting by sections; but so jealous were they of their rights that no act was obligatory on any until all of them had had an opportunity to vote and speak upon it, and the negative of one Conference defeated the measure. The council was composed of the best men in the connection whom Mr. Asbury could select, but it was after all Mr. Asbury's voice which was heard. He himself was much pleased at the results of the first session and much disappointed when it failed.

The council adjourned in the early part of December, and with Richard Whatcoat as a companion Asbury began his journey to the south, and at the end of the year 1789 he found himself in Gloucester, Vir-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ginia. This part of the tide-water country was at that time the wealthiest section of that then wealthy state, and here Methodism had made an impression upon the leading people, and he was accustomed to pay them an annual visit.

He was now hurrying to the south, that he might meet the South Carolina Conference, which was to meet in Charleston in February.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XVIII.

1790.

Over the Continent—North Carolina—Charleston—Georgia—Western North Carolina—Over the Mountains—General Russell's—Kentucky—Virginia—Pennsylvania—Cokesbury.

THE beginning of 1790 found Asbury in the center of the tide-water country in Virginia, hastening as rapidly as possible toward the south. The rivers were crossed with great difficulty, and he had the Potomac, the James, and the Ronoake to cross near their mouths. The cost for ferriage alone, he says, was £3. He passed through the section in which James O'Kelly had long exerted great influence, and it was on this journey that O'Kelly made the complaint alluded to in our last chapter. After crossing the Roanoke River into North Carolina, he rode westward through the then thickly-settled counties of central North Carolina. The journey was free from incident, and by the 10th of February he was in Charleston once more, where he met the South Carolina Conference.

This Conference, which did not at that time include Georgia, was a small body, and after a short session the good bishop rode on his way to Georgia, and entering it near Augusta he preached at the old church in Burke county, which is still an appointment in the Burke Circuit, and at a church near Fenn's Bridge in Jefferson county. He was now making search for a section of land on which to locate the Wesley and Whitefield school. The land he exam-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ined did not suit him, and the purchase was not made. He met the Conference of Georgia preachers again at Grant's, and after a short session he began his journey northward. On his way he rested at a brother Herbert's, in Elbert county, where the saintly Major had passed away. Asbury said that a poor sinner was struck with conviction at the grave of this weeping prophet, whose voice he heard calling him to repentance. John Andrew, the father of James O. Andrew, was on the circuit at this time, and Asbury says he heard of a woman who sent for him to preach her funeral sermon while she was living. The quaint preacher did so, and she was blessed under the word and died in peace.

With a rapid ride he came into western North Carolina. Here he was taken with a disorder that proved fatal to his grandfather, and he was serious and despondent. Death, he thought, was not far away, and he says somewhat innocently: "I could give up the Church, the colleges, and the schools; nevertheless there is one drawback. What will my enemies and mistaken friends say? Why, that 'he hath offended the Lord, and he hath taken him away.'" He was on his way to Kentucky, and the journey was made by crossing the mountains into Johnson county, Tennessee, across the head waters of the Watauga and the Holston. The house in which they slept was without a cover; the wolves howled, and rain fell in torrents. They crossed the mountain in the rain, and while the good bishop was looking for the guide he was carried with full force against a tree, but with no serious damage. To add to his misfortunes, when they reached the Holston country they turned the horses out to graze,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and they could not find them. They had either been stolen by the Indians or strayed afar. At last the estrays were recovered, and he pursued the same course he had taken on his first journey to the Holston country, going from North Carolina into Tennessee, and thence to his friend General Russell's, where there was a little time to rest and prepare for the dangerous journey to Kentucky. The Indians had been on the war path, and there was constant danger from them. The road was dreary and he was sick, but the untiring man pressed on. Peter Massie and John Clark, from Kentucky, met him, and then the footsteps of the sick man were turned toward Kentucky. He came into Kentucky through Moccasin Gap, along the north branch of the Holston and the Clinch, and through the wilds across the Kentucky River, until at length they reached the settlement at Lexington. When he returned he came by the Crab Orchard and by Cumberland Gap, and back again to General Russell's. He now made his way as rapidly as possible to McKnight's, on the Yadkin, where the Conference had been awaiting his coming for two weeks. There was no rest for him. The Conference here was no sooner over than he pressed on to Petersburg, in Virginia, where he met the Virginia Conference, and where he had the trouble he looked for about the council.

Although the year was only half gone, he had already crossed the Alleghanies and the other ranges of the great Appalachian chain four times, but was to climb them again before the year ended; for after leaving Petersburg he made the same journey through Botetourt and Greenbrier to Uniontown, Pennsylvania, by the route of which we have given

Digitized by Microsoft®

account in our last chapter. Then the weary man turned his face toward the east, where the comforts of an old civilization were to be found. To one who had been for long months among the rocks, mountains, rattlesnakes, fleas, and cabins, the change to a land of comfortable and often elegant homes must have been a relief as much as a pleasure. He had but little time to tarry anywhere, and he made a hurried journey through Maryland, during which time he visited Cokesbury.

The college was now fairly under way, and there were forty-six students. There were some public exercises, evidently for his benefit, some philosophical lectures by the faculty, and in the afternoon the boys declaimed. Some parts of this exercise were very exceptionable, and the stern bishop took note of them. The rules adopted were revised. Impracticable before, they were doubtless more so afterwards.

Asbury presided over the Philadelphia Conference in September and the New York Conference in October. Then he journeyed through Chester, where he found that the good widow Withey, who kept the best inn on the continent and always entertained the preachers, was feeble in body and depressed in mind; from which depression, one is glad to know, the good Mary made a happy recovery. He came through the eastern shore of Delaware and Maryland, the brightest spot to him in all the land, and finally reached Baltimore in December, where the council met at his friend Philip Rogers's, and had its second and last session. He ended the year of immense labor in the heart of Virginia, having made a circuit that extended from New York and the Atlantic on the north and east to the remotest points on the western frontier.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XIX.

1791.

Arminian Magazine—Coke's Arrival in Charleston—William Hammett—Georgia Conference—Virginia—Wesley's Death—Coke's Return to England—Jesse Lee—New England—Asbury's Visit.

DURING the year 1790 the second volume of the *Arminian Magazine* had been issued. It was almost an exact reproduction of the *Arminian Magazine* in England, and seems to us of this day a somewhat dull and dreary volume, filled with the interminable discussions of Calvinistic errors. Asbury says he finished reading the second volume, and notwithstanding its defects it was one of the best and cheapest books in America. He says the poetry might be better, and no one will be likely to controvert him.

The route that Asbury took to reach Charleston was the same he had traveled before. He found, however, much to his gratification, that Methodism was securing a stronger foothold in all this tidewater country. The journey, always a disagreeable one in winter, at last ended in Charleston.

An entry in the journal shows that Asbury still used the Church service provided by Wesley in 1784. He says: "I read prayers, after which brother Ellis preached."

The young preachers in Georgia were now engaged in a controversy. History does not say with whom, but likely with the Baptists, then beginning a very

Digitized by Microsoft®

aggressive campaign under Silas Mercer, and the Calvinistic Presbyterians. Asbury objected seriously to it, and said we had better work to do.

The indefatigable Dr. Coke, at Mr. Wesley's instance, had come by the West Indies to South Carolina. Near Charleston he had been wrecked on Edisto Island, but he made his way to Charleston, and brought with him William Hammett, a young Irishman, who afterwards gave Asbury a world of trouble. The people were anxious to have the gifted Irishman appointed as their preacher; but it was a thing unheard of among the Methodists that the people should choose their own preacher, and so Mr. Asbury sent Ellis and Parks instead, much to the dissatisfaction of the people, and as much to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Hammett. After the Conference in Charleston was over, Bishop Coke took one route and Bishop Asbury another to unite at Scott's, in Wilkes county, where the Conference was to be held. It is evident that the meeting between the two bishops was not very cordial, that their relations were somewhat strained. Dr. Coke had evidently been in correspondence with O'Kelly, and he had come to America, possibly after consultation with Mr. Wesley, to put a speedy end to the council. The good bishops came to an understanding, however, and decided that the council was to be among the things of the past, and that a General Conference was to be called.

Asbury made his way to Georgia by going through Beaufort and Barnwell and into Burke county in Georgia. When in Waynesboro he spent a night with an intelligent Jew, Henry by name, who joined with him in reading the Hebrew Bible till late in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

night. The people in the very insignificant village of Waynesboro, as it was then, paid little heed to the earnest bishop when he tried to gather them into the courthouse for service, and he says: "Catch me here again till things are changed and mended."

The Conference met at Scott's, a church in Wilkes county, and Asbury and Coke were both present. Matters in Georgia were not prosperous as far as religion was concerned. Everything was in a bustle, the new lands were being settled, emigrants were crowding into the new state, negroes were now being hurried into the newly-settled country by the Old and New England slave dealers, since the slave trade was to end in a few years, and nothing was favorable to religion. Decline had begun, and decline continued for several weary, gloomy years. As the two bishops passed on their way northward through South Carolina, they preached to the Catawba Indians who were still there. They made their way to McKnight's on the Yadkin, and thence through the midst of Virginia to Petersburg, where the Virginia Conference was to meet. Here a crumb of comfort was given to those who were so displeased with the condition of things, and they were now assured that the council should meet no more, and the General Conference should meet during the next year.

It was on this tour that the tidings reached them that the good Wesley was dead. It was high time that his trusted lieutenant, Dr. Coke, should set off for England, and so the two bishops hurried to the first seaport where shipping could be secured. While they were in Baltimore, Dr. Coke was requested to preach a memorial sermon. The little doctor was never discreet, and he wounded his breth-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ren deeply by telling them that the good Wesley's death was no doubt hastened by their leaving his name off the minutes and repealing the celebrated resolution. As Mr. Wesley was eighty-eight years old, and had outlived all the male members of his family, it is hardly likely that the conjecture of the good doctor was correct.

Coke was needed in England, where things were in much of a chaos, despite the chancery bill with its legal hundred, and so he left Mr. Asbury alone and hurried home.

The Charleston people had been much charmed by the fervid Irishman Dr. Coke had brought with him, and wanted him as their preacher; and not satisfied with Mr. Asbury's first refusal, they sent Mr. Hammett himself with a petition all the way to Philadelphia only to have their labor for their trouble, for Mr. Asbury refused them again. Mr. Hammett was, however, put up to preach in New York and Philadelphia, which preaching was less acceptable to the people than it had been to those in Charleston.

The bishop now presided over the New York Conference, which then included New England, and made ready for his first trip to New England.

When Asbury was on his first southern tour, in company with Jesse Lee and Henry Willis, he passed through Cheraw, South Carolina, and Lee was thrown in company with a young New Englander. The New Englander told the companionable Virginian what was to him a doleful story of the religious destitution in New England. A land where the people were all Calvinists—where there were no class meetings and love feasts, where nobody ever shouted in meeting—was a land demand-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ing missionary care, and the young man was anxious to go there at once, but Asbury had other work for him, and he did not go until five years had passed; then he went. He had far from a cordial reception, but he went on his way hammering, as he said, on the Saybrook platform, and running a tilt against almost everything the good New Englanders held dear. He roamed over Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, and at last secured a foothold in several places. He was now a member of the New York Conference, and was appointed to the New England Circuit.

The time had now come for Asbury to visit New England, and after the close of the New York Conference he, in company with Jesse Lee, turned his face toward the land of the Presbyterians, as he called the Congregationalists. New England had been settled for nearly one hundred and seventy-five years, and certainly did seem to need missionaries as little as any part of America. It was the land of steady habits and stalwart theology. As yet the Unitarian had not dared to promulgate his views, and was not bold enough to attack the orthodox faith. Arminianism, which had been so dreaded in the days of Jonathan Edwards fifty years before that a great revival had resulted from prayers to avert the heresy, had only now come with this stalwart, unceremonious, irreverent Virginian. The New England legislatures still levied a tax to support the standing order. The morals of the people were unexceptionable, and their customs were in strict accord with the best Puritanic models.

Mr. Asbury had been twenty years in America before he put foot in New England, and now he began

Digitized by Microsoft®

his tour by entering Connecticut. It is not probable that he expected a cordial reception, and he certainly did not have it. It was, however, not likely that when the strong, portly Lee and his delicate companion came into a quiet New England town and began a service they would fail to draw attention to themselves; and if they did not please the people, they certainly interested them. Sometimes they found a church open, and sometimes the selectmen allowed them a house to preach in, but often they were homeless.

The larger part of the country in which Asbury had been at work for all these years, and especially since he had been bishop, was a country of broad acres and scattered people. Much of it was new, and the houses were uncomely cabins, but now he found himself where he was never out of sight of a neat house, and rarely out of sight of a church. The country reminded him of Derbyshire in England. The people to whom he had been preaching were generally sinners outright. They did not claim to be Christians, and were not formalists; but now he found himself where Church membership was expected from all respectable people. He came to his conclusion as to the religious condition of the states, one would think, somewhat precipitately, since he made up his verdict in less than forty-eight hours after he reached Connecticut. He thought "there had been religion there once, but doubted if there was much left. There had doubtless been a praying ministry and membership, but he thought now both were dead." Perhaps the good bishop saw through brother Lee's spectacles. The churches were, of course, generally closed against

Digitized by Microsoft®

him; but the barns were open, and he preached his first sermon in a barn. The effect of his preaching was very decided. Some smiled, some wept; some laughed outright, and some swore. He and his companion came to New Haven, where Yale College, with President Stiles, was. It was a somewhat venturesome step, and they found no church to receive them. Asbury preached what he evidently thought was a poor sermon, with the sun shining in his face.

The next day they visited Yale College, but the visitors received scant courtesy. Little did President Stiles and his faculty know that one of his visitors controlled a college himself, or he might have been more courteous. Asbury was not unmindful of the rudeness, and promised himself that if they came to Cokesbury he would treat them in a more gentlemanly way. Well, perhaps there was much to be said on the other side. If ever men appeared to be impudent intruders on the domain of others, Asbury and Lee so appeared to President Stiles and his associates. To intimate that anything more was needed than Yale was doing might have come with some grace from some people, but from these unlearned, fanatical men it was the height of absurdity; and then, too, that Arminians and prelatists should come on a mission to New England was both impudent and presumptuous.

The bishop and his companion went on a tour through Rhode Island. They found sundry churches at Providence and Newport, but met a chilling reception in both cities; and after a hasty ride through the country, they reached Boston. It then had in its borders nine Congregational churches, one Quaker meetinghouse, one Sandemanian, one Roman Catho-

Digitized by Microsoft®

lic, one Universalist, and two Episcopal. The church of Mr. Murray was opened to them, but the hospitality the visitors received was limited. Asbury said even in wicked Charleston he was invited to sundry homes, but now no one opened his door to him. His congregations, too, were very small; at first not more than twenty-six in a large church came to hear him. He decided that he had done with Boston until he could get a house to preach in and some one to entertain him, and made his way to Lynn. Here Methodism had made an impression and secured a foothold. Here there was a home at least, and here he was able to hold sundry profitable services. He went to Salem, "where the witches were burned, and sought the graves of those whom the Puritans had put to death for their religion." There was no place here for this weary evangelist; although there were five churches, none was open to him, and he decided to put Salem in the same catalogue with Boston.

At Manchester Mr. Foster, of honored memory, received him with great kindness, and the selectmen gave him the courthouse to preach in. There was a place where provision was made to entertain ministers, and an amount of money offered for their services. The high-spirited bishop refused their hospitality and their compensation. He made quite a tour in Massachusetts, and was much struck with the earnest wish of those with whom he dined in a certain place, who said that the people were now united and did not wish to divide the parish. "Their fathers, the Puritans, divided the kingdom and Church, too," Asbury said. After a little longer stay in Massachusetts and Connecticut, he reëntered New York and came southward.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XX.

1792.

Returns Southward—Cokesbury Troubles—Virginia Conference—North Carolina Conference—Troubles in Charleston—Georgia Conference—Beverly Allen's Expulsion—Tour to Kentucky—Northward Again.

IN the early fall Asbury returned from New England, and, preaching as he went, made his way through New York, New Jersey, and Delaware to Baltimore. He was still burdened with Cokesbury, and when he reached Baltimore he trudged through the snow begging money to board and educate the orphans who came there. He was anxious to found a female school, and made some plans looking in that direction. With Thomas Morrill he began his journey to the farther south, and along his accustomed route he made his way to Green Hill's in North Carolina. The journey was an uneventful one, but was fatiguing. The plan of holding the Conference in small sections was still adhered to, and did not undergo any change till the next year. The Virginia Conference met at Dickinson's, in Caroline county, and the North Carolina Conference at that excellent local preacher's Green Hill's, where it held several of its sessions.

During this tour he thought at one time he had secured the blessing of perfect love, and cautiously so expressed himself; but a few months afterwards he speaks in another strain. In October he says: "I am afraid of losing the peace I feel; for months past I have seemed to be in the possession of perfect love."

Digitized by Microsoft®

But he says on the 21st of the same month: "Temptations oppressed my soul and disease my body; I fear I am not so constant in prayer as I should be."

He did not reach Charleston as soon as usual, and January, 1792, found him in Norfolk, where his heart was gladdened by the evidences of a revival. The North Carolina Conference was to meet early the next week at Green Hill's; and though the weather was very cold, and his exposure very great, he and his companion, Thomas Morrill, pressed on. His chief cordial, he says, was to preach at night; and despite his weary ride, he was always ready for his pulpit. Except in Georgetown and Charleston, he says his congregations were generally good. It was in February before he reached Charleston.

His companion in this journey was Thomas Morrill, who had been an officer in the Revolutionary army, and who was long one of his most trusted helpers as well as one of his most intimate friends. Asbury's custom was always to have a traveling companion, and his companion generally found that pleasant as it was to be in the bishop's company the price paid for the pleasure was not a small one.

We noted in the last chapter the arrival in Charleston of the young Irishman, William Hammett, and his vain effort to get the appointments of Parks and Ellis changed to secure the appointments for himself. Although Dr. Coke had brought him from the West Indies, he seems to have turned from him, much to Hammett's vexation. After failing in Philadelphia to get Asbury to change his decision, he came back to Charleston and established an independent church. This was the first schism in the societies. Hammett was very popular with many of the Meth-

Digitized by Microsoft®

odists in Charleston, and with many who were friends, although not members, of society; and after he had preached in a hall for some time, they rallied to his help, and built him a neat, and, for the Methodists of that time, a handsome church, which he called Trinity.

The disaffection reached the country round about, and in Georgetown he had another congregation. He was very popular for a short time, but only lived a few years. He was very bitter in his denunciation of Coke and Asbury, and never was reconciled to them or the connection. Lorenzo Dow, on a visit to Charleston some years after this, made an entry in his journal which was published, in which he said Hammett died drunk. Hammett's son sued Lorenzo for libel, and he was convicted and mildly punished for slandering the dead man. Some years after Hammett's death the church fell into the hands of the Asburyan Methodists, among whom it still remains. Asbury said Hammett charged the American preachers with having insulted him, and said his name had been left off the minutes, and that the cautioning minute was against him. Asbury not only had trouble with Mr. Hammett, but some one else, who he thinks was Mr. S., wrote him an abusive, anonymous letter containing several charges; and Mr. Philip Matthews sent in his resignation as a traveling preacher and withdrew from the connection. The year opened as the last had, in a storm, but the determined Asbury never stood aside for a moment. Immediately after the Conference closed he turned his face toward Georgia. There was trouble here, as there had been in Charleston. Beverly Allen had been a prominent figure in the history of

Digitized by Microsoft®

the early Church. He was energetic, gifted, and a man of good lineage, who had married into an excellent family in South Carolina. He had not worked in good accord with Asbury, who always distrusted him. He had become involved in serious trouble, and when Asbury, after a fatiguing journey, met the Conference at Washington, he had the painful task of pronouncing his expulsion. There was quite a sifting and searching, and others were involved in censure. When the Conference closed he took Hardy Herbert and Hope Hull and began his journey toward the distant west. He aimed to reach Kentucky, and with his companions went through western North Carolina directly to General Russell's in southwestern Virginia. The gateway t Kentucky was by the route traveled before through Cumberland Gap. It was a wild trail till he reached the first settlements at the Crab Orchard. The huts in which these first settlers lived were small and filthy, and a severe dysentery fastened upon him; but he found in these wilds a little good claret wine, which set him up again, and he pressed on to their thicker settlements. Kentucky was rapidly filling up, and the question of its status after its admission into the Union was now being settled. Should it be a slave or a free state? Ten years before this, David Rice, a Virginia Presbyterian, had come from Virginia with the first Virginian immigrants and established the first Presbyterian Church in Kentucky. He had also established a high school, and was a leading man in the territory. He was bitterly opposed to slavery, and had written a letter to the convention protesting against allowing it in Kentucky. This letter Asbury read with great pleasure, and while in Kentucky he

Digitized by Microsoft®

wrote a letter to Rice encouraging him and applauding his course. Francis Poythress, who belonged to one of the oldest families in Virginia, who had been licensed to preach by Asbury, and who had been one of his trusted helpers, was now in charge of the Kentucky District. He had planned a high school, and five hundred acres of land had been given for its endowment. He was now trying to raise money for the buildings, and Asbury made the school a visit. No one at the present day can have any true idea of the difficulties encountered by those who projected and attempted to build houses for schools in these last days of the last century, and it is not to be wondered at that the effort of Poythress was not fully successful. The times were greatly disordered. The convention to form a constitution was to be called. The Indian tribes were in revolt. The Cherokees on the south and the Wyandots on the north were both on the warpath, and between all these excitements the little band that composed the Conference had a rather uneasy session.

The session, however, was held; and now as the country was, Asbury preached to large crowds. Despite all the hardships of the wilderness and the dangers from the Indians, the spirit of matrimony, he says, was very prevalent. In one circuit the preachers were all settled. This was a serious matter to one who wanted men on horseback. The land, he said, was good, the country new, there were all the facilities for family maintenance, and so the susceptible preachers were drawn into the marriage net.

He finished his work in Kentucky and started on the same route back toward Virginia. In passing through the mountains he came near the hostile sav-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ages; guards were posted, and he stood guard all night. He met the Holston Conference, and thence went back again to his old friend General Russell's.

Although parts of eastern Virginia had been settled nearly two hundred years and the country was aged and worn, the western slope had only been occupied by white people since just before the Revolution. The beautiful valleys of Kentucky and of the Holston country, and even of what is now Middle Tennessee, were being rapidly populated, but the mountains of Virginia, in whose bosoms were hid the great treasures of coal and iron, were as they had stood for all the centuries. There was, however, a rich and narrow valley along the Kanawha, which was even then being occupied. The adventurous surveyor, George Washington, had explored these lands while he was a young man, and had preëmpted a large part of this almost matchless valley.

Asbury left General Russell's and made his way northward through this valley, and thence rode the one hundred weary miles through almost unbroken forests to meet his few western preachers in the older settlements among the grass-clad hills of Greenbrier. With him labor and exposure were so common that his scant records give but a faint idea of the sacrifice their toils demanded; but let one acquainted with the topography of this western section follow him in his journeyings, and he will see something of the labor he must have undergone. His trip to Uniontown, in Pennsylvania, where he met the western section of the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and western Virginia preachers, was by the same wearisome route of which we have already given account. He turned eastward, and now for the first time in weary

Digitized by Microsoft®

months found himself in the midst of comfort and refinement. He paused but a little while, and pressed on to New England to make his second visit. Here in Lynn, in a half-finished house, he held the second New England Conference. The contrast between the old civilization and the new Church was as marked in New England as the new settlements and the new Church in the far west. Old England had over one hundred and fifty years before almost transferred a part of herself to the section in which this little Conference now met. It might be said that this country was never new, and it was especially true that its religious features were fixed, and yet all the hardships of the frontier were found here in the midst of this old civilization. The visit to Lynn and the effort to provide preachers for the old east, while far less exciting than the journey to Kentucky, was scarcely less trying.

The western part of New York was being rapidly peopled. New Englanders and those from the older parts of the state were pressing their way toward the lakes. Freeborn Garrettson had for six years been laboring in this section and had established Methodism permanently in it, and he and his sturdy corps of evangelists met Asbury in Albany. During this year Garrettson, the elegant Maryland gentleman, married into the distinguished Livingston family; and this marriage introduced Asbury into the old families of the Hudson, among whom he found kindly friends for many years after this. Although Methodism worked largely among the poor and uneducated both in England and America, she numbered among her truest friends and warmest supporters some from the most distinguished of its noble and

Digitized by Microsoft®

aristocratic families; and the Livingstons, Van Cortlands, Carrolls, Ridgleys, Balls, Remberts, Grants, Meriwethers, and many others, were not inferior in social position to any family in the land.

During this tour Asbury was accompanied by Hope Hull, of whom we have spoken before, and he left the young Marylander in Hartford, where he spent a year. During this time he was the instrument in the conversion of a youth who became one of the most striking personages in the early part of the century. This was Lorenzo Dow. He was an ill-balanced but remarkably gifted Connecticut boy, who tried to be a traveling preacher in the regular connection, but who found the restraints of its discipline too great for him and became a free lance in theology, who preached from Maine to Mississippi, then the western frontier, and who for the first ten years of this century had perhaps a stronger hold on public attention than any other Methodist preacher on the continent.

When the bishop reached New York City on his return, the warm-hearted Methodists of the society replenished his empty purse and provided him with a new wardrobe. This supplied his needs, and he complacently says that this was better than £500 a year. It is evident that the good bishop, contrasting the position of the comfortably placed pastor of one of the rich churches of the east with the Methodist bishop and his $80 a year, traveling from Maine to Georgia, was not disposed to discount the Methodist.

Going from New York he stopped in Philadelphia where he found things in the Ebenezer church in a lively state. His description of the meeting gives us an insight into many of the meetings of those days: "The mobility then came in like the roaring of the

Digitized by Microsoft®

sea. They had been alarmed the night before by a shout, which probably was one cause why the congregation was so large. Brother A. went to prayer; a person cried out; brother C. joined in; the wicked were collected to oppose. I felt the power of darkness was very strong. . . . This is a wicked, a horribly wicked city; for their unfaithfulness they will be smitten in anger for their sleepy silence in the house of God, which ought to resound with the voice of praise and frequent prayer; the Lord will visit their streets with the silence of desolation."

He left Philadelphia for the eastern shore and made his annual tour, and then went with a heavy heart to Baltimore. His heart was heavy because the General Conference was to meet. It is useless to deny the fact, Bishop Asbury did not wish the General Conference to assemble. He did not wish to be hampered. He thought he knew the necessity of the times and that he was master of the situation. While he cared not a jot for power, except as a means to do good, he believed every restriction put upon him would be to the injury of the work; but the Annual Conferences had called the Conference, and now he went to meet it.

The General Conference met November 1, 1792. It was simply a mass meeting of the traveling preachers. The Christmas Conference of 1784 had done little more than to legalize the suggestions of Dr. Coke, who brought over the service-book, and the regulations suggested by Mr. Wesley, and any legislation since that time had been done by the preachers acting through their District or Annual Conferences. Bishop Asbury, as we have said, did not wish a General Conference called; but Dr. Coke

Digitized by Microsoft®

did, and he expressed the wish of the preachers. Bishop Asbury expected what was the fact, that there would be a complete revision of the Discipline, and feared that there would be sundry very unpleasant alterations. He says, October 31st: "Came to Baltimore in a storm of rain. Whilst we were sitting in the room at Mr. Ross's in came Dr. Coke, of whose arrival I had not heard and whom we embraced with great love. I felt awful at the General Conference which began November 1, 1792. At my desire they appointed a moderator and preparatory committee to keep order and bring forward the business with regularity. We had heavy debates on the first, second, and third sections of our form of discipline. My power to station the preachers without an appeal was much debated, but finally carried by a large majority. Perhaps a new bishop, new Conference, and new laws would have better pleased some."

The bishop was not well, and after sitting with the Conference a week he went to bed, and wrote to the body the letter which is found below. The real ground of conflict was as to the power to be allowed him. Should the American preachers have the liberty of the English connection, and should one dissatisfied with his appointment be allowed to appeal to the Conference and ask for a change? James O'Kelly led those who asked for this privilege. He was seconded by strong men who had been closely connected with Asbury, and were much attached to him personally. Among them were Richard Ivey, Hope Hull, and Freeborn Garrettson. Their devotion to the Church could not be questioned, and their ability was conceded; but opposed to them were men of equal ability, and some of these

Digitized by Microsoft®

were not favorites with Asbury, nor was he in high favor with them. Jesse Lee, who in after years was a leader of the liberals, stood by Asbury in this contest, and did as much to defeat O'Kelly as any one of the body. While the matter was being discussed, Asbury withdrew and wrote the following letter:

My Dear Brethren: Let my absence give you no pain. Dr. Coke presides. I am happily excused from assisti- g to make laws by which I myself am to be governed. I have only to obey and execute. I am happy in the consideration that I have never stationed a preacher through enmity or as a punishment. I have acted for the glory of God, the good of the people, and to promote the usefulness of the preachers. Are you sure that if you please yourselves the people will be as fully satisfied? They often say, "Let us have such a preacher;" and sometimes, "We will not have such a preacher; we will sooner pay him to stay at home." Perhaps, I must say, his appeal forced him upon you. I am one, you are many; I am as willing to serve you as ever. I want not to sit in any man's way; I scorn to solicit your votes; I am a very trembling poor creature to hear praise or dispraise. Speak your minds freely, but remember you are only making laws for the present time. It may be that, as in some other things, so in this, a future day may give you further light.

The Conference refused to make the change asked for, and O'Kelly, disappointed and angered, gathered up his saddlebags and, with some of those associated with him, withdrew from the Conference room and returned to his home in Virginia. The Conference was anxious to conciliate him, but he was not willing to be reconciled, and after a few months of silence he withdrew entirely from the connection and formed the Republican Methodists. He was in after times very bitter toward his old associate; but they met when O'Kelly was on his deathbed, and Asbury prayed for him and with him, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

they parted to meet no more on earth. The positive old Irishman had been too long in control of things in his section to submit to another's dictation, and a separation between the two was inevitable. There was, however, nothing in O'Kelly's motives which seems to have been censurable. He really thought the arbitrary course which a bishop might take ought to be anticipated and provided against, but Asbury could not see any danger from that direction.

As Asbury came southward after the General Conference adjourned, he found the leaven at work, and Rice Haggard and William McKendree both withdrew from the connection. McKendree afterwards returned, and when he was a bishop stood as firmly for the episcopal prerogative as he had opposed it in Baltimore; and no man was ever nearer to Asbury than he was in after days.

Bishop Asbury rode through central North Carolina to Rembert Hall, in South Carolina. Col. James Rembert, a wealthy slave owner who lived on Black River, was one of the wealthiest and most pious men of his section. Rembert Hall was on Asbury's route to Charleston, and once a year he found shelter there. After a brief stay the bishop went on to Charleston, and found that the eloquent Hammett had raised a grand house and written an appeal to the British Conference, in which he said some very hard things of Dr. Coke, and doubtless of Asbury. As soon as Conference was over, he made his journey to Georgia. He found a resting place at Thomas Haynes's. Haynes was one of those sturdy Virginians who settled in Georgia, and whose life was devoted to the building up of the Methodist Church, and whose distinguished family has done so much for it.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The Conference met at Grant's, and it was decided to unite the South Carolina and Georgia Conferences, or districts as they were then called, and thenceforth they were known as the South Carolina Conference, until the division again nearly forty years afterwards.

Mr. Asbury now resolved to take a tour through the older settled parts of Georgia and South Carolina. He rode through the pine woods, and over the sand beds through Warren, Burke, Screven, and Effingham counties, to Savannah. The settlers along the way were few, and he says the time between meals was long. He stopped with an old friend who had received a letter from Mr. Philip Matthews, in which the charge was made by Mr. Hammett "that Mr. Wesley's absolute authority over the societies was not established in America because of Bishop Asbury's opposition." Bishop Asbury admits this, but says the "Americans were too jealous to bind themselves to yield to him in all things relative to Church government."

The travelers reached Savannah, to which Hope Hull had been sent, but where no society had yet been formed. Bishop Asbury saw Whitefield's Orphan House in ruins, and came by Ebenezer where the Salzburghers were then established. The courthouse in Savannah was offered him, but he preached at Mr. M.'s. This was doubtless at Mr. Millen's, a good Presbyterian who always befriended the struggling Methodists. Mr. Asbury supposed Savannah had then two thousand people in it. There was an Independent, an Episcopal, a Baptist, and a Lutheran church there. He crossed the Savannah River at Sister's ferry, in Effingham county, preached at

Digitized by Microsoft®

Black Swamp, and rode to Purysburg, and from thence, along what is now the Charleston and Savannah railroad, to Charleston. Much of the country was an unbroken pine wood, though along the rivers there were occasional rice plantations. This journey took him over much the same country which Mr. Wesley had traveled, on foot, when he left Savannah the last time. After a wearisome travel he reached Charleston. At this time the congregation there consisted of five hundred, of whom two hundred were whites. In no city in the United States has the Methodist Church suffered so much from intestine troubles as in Charleston, and the progress made in spite of Mr. Hammett's division was really remarkable. The bishop expected to remain in Charleston a little while, but a sick friend came from the north who needed the country air, and he hurried away.

For nearly a hundred miles from Charleston, in every direction, there are swamps and rivers, and his journal of travel is little more than a wearisome account of rivers ferried or creeks swum. He reached the newly-established capital of South Carolina, Columbia, and then through the high waters made his way toward North Carolina.

His rule was to have appointments to preach at every place where he stopped. He rose in the morning at four o'clock, read his Bible and prayed till six, and as soon as breakfast could be had he began his travel again. The country was comparatively new and was being rapidly peopled, chiefly by emigrants from Virginia and Maryland. He kept the question of where a new preacher should be sent continually before him, and kept watch for the preacher. He

Digitized by Microsoft®

went into the question of where the preachers should be stationed with a perfect acquaintance with the work.

He was untiring, and though feeble, worn, and often really sick, he did not spare himself, but pressed on his way. His life story is almost a monotonous one, for days but repeat themselves, and they all tell the same story. Despite the fatigue of travel, he was not neglectful of his books. He carried a few with him, and during his long rides he read and studied. His Hebrew Bible was his constant companion, and while he was making his journey through the hills of upper South Carolina he was studying Hebrew points and planning a new school.

He was making his way to the Holston country, and traveled through the mountains of North Carolina, going his most direct route to General Russell's, in southwest Virginia. The western part of North Carolina was then a comparatively new country, and was largely peopled by settlers from Germany and Ireland, or their immediate descendants. There were few comforts to be found on any line of travel, and very few indeed on the rough mountain trail he and his companions pursued. They were glad to get a few Irish potatoes, some flax for bedding, and a few boards to shelter them. The bishop, however, made the journey safely, preaching as he went, and after crossing the Watauga River and climbing the Stone and Iron mountains, and descending that steep side where it was impossible to ride, and where his rheumatism made it very painful to go on foot, he finally reached the hospitable home of his good old friend Madam Russell. This excellent woman was a second time a widow.

Digitized by Microsoft®

General Russell, the brave old soldier, who had become in later life a happy, useful Christian, had gone to his reward. Asbury preached at the home of the widow, and there followed several exhortations. They were five hours in the exercise, and there was shouting and weeping among the people. No wonder he adds: "I have little rest by day or night; Lord, help thy poor dust." "I feel unexpected storms from various quarters. Perhaps it is designed for my humiliation. It is sin in thought I am afraid of; none but Jesus can supply us, by his merit, his spirit, his righteousness, his intercession."

He made his way again to Rehoboth, in Monroe county, Virginia, where he met the preachers of southwest Virginia, and then through the wild Alleghanies one hundred miles to the then small but lively village of Staunton. There was an Episcopal church, a courthouse, a tavern, and some good stores. Then down the valley to Winchester, where "we had an excellent new house," and then to his rest at wicked Bath.

After recruiting, he crossed the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania and upper New Jersey and went up the Hudson to Albany. The people of Albany, he says, "roll in wealth, but they had no heart to ask the poor preachers to their homes."

Although it was but the middle of the year, this indefatigable man had gone from Charleston, South Carolina, through the wildest mountains of the Alleghany range, to Connecticut.

Methodism had come to New England to stay, and the Conference was to meet at Tolland. With a blister behind his ear for a sore throat and a poultice on his foot for rheumatism, he consented to rest a little

Digitized by Microsoft®

while, but only for two days. He was again attacked by the rheumatism, and was not able to walk from his horse to the house, and had to be lifted down from the saddle and up again.

On his way back, when he came near Whitehall, in New York, his horse started and threw him into a mill race, and his shoulder was hurt by the fall. He stopped at a house, changed his wet clothes, and prayed with the people. "If any of these people are awakened by my stopping here," says he, "all will be well."

The calamity he had predicted the year before had fallen on Philadelphia—the yellow fever was there, and there was silence in the streets. It was almost recklessness that would lead one to go into the plague-stricken town, but he never turned his horse's head. He rode at once into the midst of the pestilence, delivered his message, and then went on his way. He had spent nearly three weeks in the midst of the sickness, and then made his annual visit to the eastern shore. He attended the last Conference of the year, at Baltimore. Here he raised a collection for the distressed preachers which amounted to £43.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXI.

1794.

Southern Tour—Great Exposure—William McKendree—Tour to the North—Southward Again—The College—R. R. Roberts.

THE Conference sessions began with the later fall months, so after leaving Baltimore the bishop made his way into Virginia and passed rapidly through the center of the state, going as far west as Prince Edward, returning eastward, and leaving the state from Brunswick county. He found that the O'Kelly trouble had not been so serious as he feared. McKendree, finding he had been misled, returned to the old fold, and was going on with him to the south. He again passed through the eastern part of North Carolina, met the Conference again at Green Hill's, and feeble and worn he came to Broad River in South Carolina, where the South Carolina Conference was to have its session. Philip Bruce, presiding elder, was very sick, and so was the bishop, but he managed to go through with the work, and on the 20th of January reached Charleston, where he had time to rest. It is a positive relief to the reader to know that for thirty days the earnest and afflicted man was as still as *he* could be. Dr. Ramsay, the first of our historians, whose histories of South Carolina and of the Revolution are so eagerly sought for, attended him; but though Asbury was willing to be blistered and to take nauseous doses, he was not willing to do the most important thing he could do—to rest. He read, he visited, he preached, while he was

Digitized by Microsoft®

here. Poor Beverly Allen, who had gone from bad to worse, killed the United States marshal in Augusta and fled to the wilderness of Kentucky. Allen had done the bishop much harm by his misrepresentations, and Asbury had always distrusted him, but now his sad fate affected him painfully. The bishop's stay in Charleston at this time was the longest stop he had made in many months; but he was eager to get to work again, and as soon as he could safely do so he was on his way to Rembert's. The country through which he rode was a peculiar one—along the river affected by the tide sufficiently to make the water available for flooding the fields were magnificent rice plantations, worked by large gangs of slaves, and then came wide stretches of uncultivated pine forests. He says, after riding twenty-seven miles without eating: "How good were the potatoes and fried gammon! We then had only two miles to brother Rembert's, where we arrived at seven o'clock. What blanks are in this country, and how much worse are the rice plantations! If a man-of-war is a floating hell, these are standing ones: wicked mothers, overseers, and negroes, cursing, drinking, no Sabbath, no sermons."

He had said little on the subject of slavery for some time. He had found that the greatest success won by Methodists had been among slave owners; so that one might have thought that he was satisfied that his views were too extreme, or that other matters seemed to him to be more important than emancipation. He, however, says now: "Some are afraid that if we retain among us none who trade in slaves, the preachers will not be supported; but my fear is, we shall not be able to supply the state with preach-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ers." He left the hospitable home of Colonel Rembert for a journey northward. Passing through the Waxhaws, where Andrew Jackson was born, he made his way into North Carolina, as he says, through discouraging prospects. He came through Charlotte, in Mecklenburg, where the Scotch-Irish had their large settlement, and with Tobias Gibson for a companion went into the Dutch settlement on the Catawba. This he found a barren place for religion. In attempting to cross the Catawba he nearly lost his life by getting into the wrong ford. There was rain, rain, and only when he reached dear old father Harper's after midnight, having been wet for six or seven hours, did he find shelter. The next day he was off again.

"It has been a heavy campaign," he said, "but my soul enjoys peace; but oh, for men of God! This campaign has made me groan, being burdened. I have provided brother Gibson, for the westward. I wrote a plan for stationing. I desired the dear preachers to be as I am in the work. I have no interest, no passions in the appointments; my only aim is to care for the flock of Christ. I feel resolved to be wholly for the Lord, weak as I am. I have done nothing, I am nothing, only for Christ, or I had been long since cut off as an unfaithful servant. Christ is all and in all I do, or it had not been done, or when done had by no means been acceptable." He did not spare himself; he did not spare anyone else, and complains that McKendree had not visited this obscure part of North Carolina in which he was, and adds: "If I could think myself of any account, I might say with Mr. Wesley, 'If it be so while I am alive, what will it be after my death?'"

Digitized by Microsoft®

No man ever lived who did not make a real merit of self-sacrifice, who had less disposition to spare himself hardships than Bishop Asbury. Livingstone inspired by his dream of mapping out Africa and destroying the slave trade, Francis Xavier in his zeal for the conversion of India to the Catholic faith, or Las Casas in his devotion to the Indians, were not more untiring in toil nor daring in exposure than was this heroic man.

One sometimes pauses to ask, "Was this martyrdom?" for martyrdom it was—a needless sacrifice; or, "Was it a demand that had to be met?" When one studies the history of those times, the rapid movement of population westward, the influence of the wild environments upon character, the need for quick, energetic, discreet action, and sees how the heroic spirit of this man made the heroes that the day demanded, he cannot but feel that there was nothing morbid in the anxiety of Asbury to make every sacrifice that the work might be pushed forward. That he might have overestimated his personal importance was but natural; and that he should have exacted too much of others, would likely have followed from his own entire disregard of everything like personal ease, when he thought duty to the work was involved.

William McKendree, to whom Asbury evidently refers under the initials, W. M., and who was afterwards to be his trusted lieutenant, and to do more for Methodism than any other man of his day, save Asbury himself, was now on the Union Circuit, in South Carolina. In those days circuits had no definite boundaries, and McKendree's parish stretched from middle South Carolina away toward the Hol-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ston country. McKendree had been a preacher now for seven years. He stood by O'Kelly in his contest with Asbury, and when O'Kelly withdrew he withdrew also; but he afterwards changed his opinion, and accepted the decision of the Conference as a wise one, and thirty years afterwards the same question, in another form, found him occupying the place that Asbury occupied in 1792.

The side lights which Asbury in his journal cast on times which many have looked upon as the golden days of Methodism are important. He was very happy, he says, while riding along toward Dr. Brower's; on his way he saw Babel, the Baptist-Methodist house, "about which there had been so much quarreling. It was made of logs, and is no great matter." And again he says: "I am astonished at professors neglecting family and private prayer. Lord, help; for there is little genuine religion in the world."

On his way, in Surrey county, North Carolina, he found some old disciples from Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. He found also a schoolhouse twenty feet square, two stories high, well set out with doors and windows, on a beautiful eminence overlooking the Yadkin, and known as Cokesbury School. This school was located in the bounds of what is now the Farmington Circuit, in the Western North Carolina Conference. He rode now to Salem, where the Moravians had a village, and thence through Guilford into Pittsylvania county, Virginia, and north by his old route through central Virginia. Going along the foothills of the Blue Ridge, he preached in the courthouse at Liberty, the county site of Bedford; but he did not find freedom to eat bread and drink water in the little village where there is now the

Digitized by Microsoft®

magnificent Randolph-Macon Academy. His soul was in peace and perfect love, he says, and he proposed to preach present conviction, conversion, and sanctification. "I might do many things better than I do," he says, "but this I do not discover till afterwards."

He went over the hills into Rockbridge, Virginia, preached at Lexington, and at length reached Winchester, where, sick and weary, he found a resting place at R. Harrison's, and gargled his poor throat with rose-leaf water and spirits of vitriol. Perhaps if the gargle had been substituted by rest, and he had felt it less a duty to make a loud noise in preaching, his throat might have recruited sooner. Though his throat was sore and his ear inflamed, and he had a chill and high fever, he attended Conference and preached, and then went on his way to brother Phelps's, in northern Virginia. The people came from every side to hear him; and though sick and weary, he took his staff and climbed the hill, and did his best.

He came again to Baltimore, where, as the people would have it, he consented to have his likeness taken. This is the portrait of him so commonly seen, and was taken when he was forty-nine years old. He made his northward trip, and in Philadelphia he had a talk with Mr. Pilmoor about Mr. G., in which there was some question about his administration of affairs. Brother Asbury stated his position: (1) He did not make rules, but had to execute them. (2) That anyone who desired him to act in disregard of these laws either insulted him as an individual or the Conference as a body of men. These two principles controlled him. Believing fully that he was

Digitized by Microsoft®

divinely called to the office and work of a bishop, yet unlike Mr. Wesley, who made the rules others were not to mend, he made no rules, but left his brethren to do that, and merely kept those made for him.

He came as far north as Providence, Rhode Island, but had no freedom to eat bread and drink water in that place. He found a good prospect at New London, and passed from thence through the Valley of the Connecticut. R. R. Roberts, afterwards the bishop, traveled with him on this tour and assisted him in his work. He could find but little of what he thought religion in this section. The Conference met on September 5th, and they went through with the business. On Sunday they spent from eight to nine in prayer; a sermon, three exhortations, and the sacrament followed. They were engaged in the service till three o'clock in the afternoon, and he broke his fast at seven. Then he came southward, attending Conference in New York and Philadelphia, and rode to Cokesbury. The college was in debt £1,200, and £300 ought to be paid at once. Thence he came to the Virginia Conference, which met at Mabry's, in Brunswick. The Conference had decided that extreme measures against slaveholding, as far as the laity was concerned, were not now wise; but that as far as the preachers were concerned, *they* should not remain in the traveling connection and hold slaves. After the Conference was over he began his usual journey southward. When he left Mrs. Mabry's, where he held Conference, he continued his journey, through rain and snow and cold, to Charleston once more.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXII.

1795.

Episcopal Journeyings—Death of Judge White—The Ennalls Family—Governor Van Cortlandt—Return South.

THE bishop remained in Charleston several weeks trying to recruit his strength. He preached, visited the people, and met the classes. The mob was very violent, breaking the church windows, disturbing the congregation while at service, and sneering at the preacher on the streets. He read diligently, and read Wesley's Journal, Flavel on Keeping the Heart, and the History of the French Revolution, but he was impatient to be gone. He, however, spent two months in the city, and labored as best he could. He says he "was very much dejected the while, and worldly people are intolerably ignorant of God. Playing, dancing, swearing, racing—these are their common practices and pursuits. Our few male members do not attend preaching, and I fear there is hardly one who walks with God. Oh, how I should prize a quiet retreat in the woods!"

He now went to the northwestern part of South Carolina, where he was trying to collect one hundred pounds to finish Bethel school. He says that on this journey he met the negroes apart from the whites, and said "for obvious reasons it was the only way in which to meet them." He ordained a deacon and married the deacon's daughter to a husband, and it was all he could do, he said, to keep the wedding company serious. Then he rode northward

Digitized by Microsoft®

through western North Carolina, to Ernest's, on the Nolachucky, in Tennessee, where he met the Holston Conference, thence through the mountains of western Virginia to Charlestown, and through Frederick, in Maryland, to his old friends, the Warfields, and on to Baltimore, and to Perry Hall. Then came to him the sad news of the death of one who had been dearer to him than any other friend he had made in America, Thomas White, whose house had been his place of refuge when he was driven from Maryland. Judge White had lived a pure life, and died a happy death. Asbury was now fifty years old, and was as dead to the world as though he had not been in it. He says: "I feel happy in speaking to all I find, whether parents, children, or servants, and I see no other way; common means will not do." While on this visit he made arrangements to build in Baltimore the first church for negroes in that city, and, I think, the first in the United States.

He was very low in health and still, he says, under awful depression. "I am not conscious," he says, "of any sin, even in thought, but the imprudence and unfaithfulness of some bear heavily on my heart."

He made a visit to the eastern shore to his friends, the Ennalls, in Dorchester, and then passed through Delaware to Philadelphia. On his way he called on the good sister Withey, "who kept the best inn on the continent, and who had entertained him when he made his first journey southward;" and one is sorry to hear that the good old sister was not well, and in trouble.

These little personal allusions show the tender nature of the fearless, strong-headed, and strong-willed man who bore all the burden of the connection on his

Digitized by Microsoft®

heart. One of his entries is especially amusing in the light of the full information he has given us of his use of the many and various remedies for his often infirmities. He says: "I came to Elizabethtown and found brother Morrel, *who had been bled and physicked almost to death*, on the road to recovery." He now went through New York and into New England. Roberts was still with him, but parted from him when he entered Vermont, which he now for the first time visited. He preached at Bennington and went to Ash Grove, in New York, to which place the good Embury had removed from New York City, and in which he died. He was now in northern New York, and at Plattsburg he had a high day. As he descended the Hudson, he came to his brother Garrettson's at Rhinebeck. Garrettson, by his marriage with Miss Livingston, had come into possession of a large property. He used it well, and never relaxed his ministerial efforts to the end of his useful life, twenty years after this.

Governor Van Cortlandt, Asbury's early friend, lived near Garrettson, and he dined with him. On his return southward he passed through New Jersey, and when he heard of a fight in which the one party had his eye gouged out, and another had his nose and ear cut off, he concluded that Jersey was worse than New England, for at least they were civil there. The Conference met in Philadelphia, and remained in session a week. Asbury then came by Chester, where we are glad to find that his old friend, Mary Withey, had made an advantageous sale of her inn, and in three weeks was to give place to the purchaser.

The Baltimore Conference, with its fifty-five

Digitized by Microsoft®

preachers, met on Tuesday and remained in session till Friday night.

The Africans in whom he had taken such an interest, and whose new church he had helped forward, now asked greater privileges than white stewards or trustees ever had a right to ask.

In his journal of this year he mentions, as far as I can find, the first bequest made to the Church by anyone in America. It was made by Stephen Davies, of Virginia, and Asbury was made his trustee. At Salem, in Brunswick, the Virginia Conference was held. After its close he made his way through North Carolina. On his journey, he says of one day's travel: "My feet were wet, my body cold, and my stomach empty, having had no dinner. I found a good fire, a warm bed, and a little medicine, each necessary in its place." "No people," he says of the good North Carolinians, "make you more welcome to their homes." "After riding twenty miles, I preached at father V.'s. I felt strangely set at liberty, and was uncommonly happy."

He says of Georgetown, South Carolina, that after ten years of circuit preaching they had done but little, but that if we could station a preacher there he still hoped for success. Brother Cannon had not labored in vain. There was now less dancing, and the playhouse was closed. He had brought with him from Virginia Benjamin Blanton, and he had him to preach, and "we had," he says, "a number of very modest and attentive hearers." He now reached Charleston, to be ready for the South Carolina Conference, which was to meet there.

As he was traveling through Virginia where there was quite a number of Quakers, he found time to ad-

Digitized by Microsoft®

dress one of them in a plain, outspoken letter, which Strickland has given us in his "Pioneer Bishop." It very strikingly illustrates the character of the good bishop, and casts some light upon the history of the times. It was written, says Strickland, to a friend in Delaware:

NEWTON, VA., Seventh Month, 1795.

My Very Dear Friend: If I have a partiality for any people in the world except the Methodists, it is for the Quakers, so called. Their plainness of dress, their love of justice and truth, their friendship to each other, and the care they take of one another, render them worthy of praise. Would it not be of use for that society that makes it a point not to come near any others, whether good or bad, to try all means within themselves—would it not be well, thinkest thou, for them to sit every night and morning, and, if they find liberty, to go to prayer after reading a portion of God's word? As epistles are read from the Friends, would it not be well to introduce the reading of some portion of the Scriptures at public meetings? Would it not be well to have a congregation and a society, an outer and an inner court? In the former, let children and servants and unawakened people come; in the inward, let mourners in Zion come.

The Presbyterians have reformed; the Episcopalians and the Methodists. Why should not the Friends?

It was a dark time one hundred and fifty years back. We are near the edge of the wilderness. If this inward court or society were divided into small bands or classes, and to be called together weekly by men and women of the deepest experience and appointed for that work, and asked about their souls and the dealings of God with them, and to join in prayer one or two or all of them that have freedom, I think the Lord would come upon them. I give this advice as the real friend of your souls, as there are hundreds and thousands that never have nor will come near others. These might get more religion if your people were to hear others; they might get properly awakened; and if you had close meetings for speaking, they would not leave you. You must not think that G. Fox and R. Barclay were the only men in the world.

Digitized by Microsoft®

I am sure there must be a reform if you could move it in quarterly and yearly meetings for family and society meetings, and adopt rules for these meetings.

Would it be well, thinkest thou, to preach against covetousness? God has blessed Friends. They are a temperate, industrious, and frugal people. Tell them to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and always feel the spirit of prayer at such times. Would it not be well to deliver a testimony at other places if Friends felt freedom, and allow others to come into their meetings without forbidding them? Our houses are open to any that come in a Christian spirit.

I wish Methodists and Friends would be a stronger testimony against races, fairs, plays, and balls. I wish they would reprove swearing, lying, and foolish talking; watch their young people in their companies, instruct them in the doctrines of the Church, call upon them to feel after the spirit of prayer morning and evening, and strive to bring them to God. If I know my own heart, I write from love to souls; and although it is the general cry, "You can do nothing with these people," I wish to lay before you these things, which I think are contrary to the ancient principles of Friends, and I am sure that we are taught them in the word of God. Think upon them. My soul pities and loves you. You may fight against God in not inculcating these things.

I am, with real friendship to thee and thy people,

Francis Asbury.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXIII.

1796.

South Carolina — Georgia—North Carolina — Tennessee — Virginia—Views of Education—Bridal Party in the Mountains —Methodism in Brooklyn—Southward Again—Francis Acuff.

THE Conference met in Charleston in January, 1796, and Asbury rested here longer than any time in his journeyings. He was virtually a pastor of the little flock, and paid great attention to the blacks, who composed so large a part of it. He met the slaves in the kitchen of Mr. Wells and in the church, where he had often two hundred and fifty in love feast. He had few social qualities, and what time he did not spend in regular pastoral work he spent in reading. All well acquainted with American history know that Washington at this time was not popular with many of the American people, who thought he leaned too much to the English and the aristocracy. This incensed the sturdy bishop, who expressed a somewhat burning indignation at those who detracted from one he so highly esteemed. As usual, when he was sedentary and spent much time in retrospection, he was despondent, as he says: "For my unholiness and unfaithfulness my soul is humbled. Were I to stand on my own merit, where should I go but to hell?"

After a month in Charleston, he started to Augusta. The country through which he rode was very flat, and it had been a season of heavy rains. The creeks and rivers were full, and his feet were contin-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ually wet. But despite his wet feet, and despite the severity of the weather, he preached in an open house as he was on his way, and administered the sacrament. He reached Augusta, and found that one of those occasional floods which mark the Savannah had inundated the streets. He said if they would know his just view they would mob him, for he believed it an "African flood, sent on them because of slavery." He rode through a few of the upper eastern counties of Georgia and reëntered South Carolina. Here he was concerned about a free school, called Bethel, out of which Cokesbury came, and afterwards Wofford College. Dr. Bangs, who was a great admirer of Asbury, says that one of the errors of his life was his failure to value education. I cannot think this stricture is just. He planned schools over the whole connection. There were Ebenezer in Virginia, Cokesbury in Maryland, Bethel in Kentucky, Bethel in South Carolina, Cokesbury in North Carolina, and Wesley and Whitefield in Georgia. If these enterprises failed, as they did, largely, it was not for his want of interest, but experience taught him that there were some things he could not do, and he wisely left the local Conferences to provide for their own needs. Passing out of South Carolina, he entered the mountains of western North Carolina. The rides were long, and homes were few, and he mentions a dinner of dried peach pies that he and his companions made in the woods. The society in that section was rude, and he writes of a jolly bridal party he met, with their flag, a white handkerchief, flying as they dashed by him and paused at a distillery to fill up with new-made apple brandy. He was soon in Tennessee, at Acuff's Chapel, built by Francis Acuff,

Digitized by Microsoft®

who was first a fiddler, then a Christian, then a preacher, and then, he trusts, a glorified saint. The journey was much the same as he had made several times before, leading him through the mountains of northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. Sometimes he rode for forty miles without finding a place to break his fast. A very fatiguing journey was made through Greenbrier and northwest Virginia into Pennsylvania; the Conference met at Uniontown, and then through western Maryland he came to Cokesbury, where he beheld the ruins of the building which had cost him so much anxiety and toil. For nearly twelve years it had been an unceasing care to him, and it is not likely that he wept scalding tears over the death of the feeble invalid. It was now the midst of summer, and he hurried through the heat northward.

When he reached New York, he spent some days in visiting chapels, and preached in the village of Brooklyn, where the Methodists were trying to get a foothold. The General Conference of 1796 met in October. The presiding elder matter was not any more agreeable than it had been at the first, and there was a stroke at it as there was afterwards for many years, but it came to naught. The determined man had his will in this matter as in most others, but not without a contest. He came from Baltimore southward through the coast counties of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and held a meeting at New Berne, North Carolina, on his way to Charleston. He predicted future greatness for the young seaport, and was much pleased at the kindness he received from the people. There was little of incident in his journey to Charleston, but when

Digitized by Microsoft®

he reached the city he heard the stunning news that the new church in Baltimore and the new college just built near by were burned, and a loss of twenty thousand dollars had fallen on the society and the Church. No wonder, with the burning of two colleges and the failure of another, the good bishop should have felt that he was not called to build them, and retired forever from the business of doing so. He had met every appointment during the year, and had traveled from Charleston to Boston and from the Atlantic coast to the mountains of Kentucky. It had been a year of excessive exposure and toil. The story of his journeys is, after all, the chief story of his laborious life, and one must refer to his homely but invaluable journal to get a true insight into the social and religious history of America at that time. No man of his day traveled so much, or so minutely tells what he saw of the people, but one who looks for startling or even striking incident in his story will be disappointed.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXIV.

1797.

Charleston—Sickness—Northward Journey—Breaks Down in Kentucky—Reaches Baltimore—Goes on His Tour Northward—Jesse Lee—Returns South—Gives Up at Brunswick, Virginia, and Retires for the Winter.

SINCE Mr. Asbury's election to the bishopric, while never very well, he had been able to do all the heavy work demanded of him; but he was now (in 1797) attacked by a long-protracted and severe intermittent fever, which came near ending his life. He had reached Charleston, January, 1797, in company with Dr. Coke, in his usual health. The winter was very severe, and he was much exposed. His old friend Edgar Wells, who had done so much for the church in Charleston, was very ill, and died not long after Asbury reached the city. Asbury attended his funeral service and paid his tribute to the good man's memory, and then was himself attacked, as he had been in Maryland years before, with a severe and persistent intermittent fever. He was kindly attended by Dr. David Ramsay, the famous historian, and as skillfully treated as the science of that day permitted. He would take the nauseous remedies prescribed, and get out of bed and work till his chill came on and the fever followed. He tried to meet the negroes every morning at six o'clock for morning prayer, and preached as often as he could. He planned the erection of another house in another part of the city, and put the matter in such shape

Digitized by Microsoft®

that Bethel church was the outcome. He was anxious to get away from Charleston. The Holston and Kentucky work seemed to demand his presence, and he was impatient at confinement in the city. Late in February, somewhat better in health, he turned his face toward the northwest. He was delighted to be in the woods once more. The southern spring was in its glory. The white dogwood, the golden jasmine, the red bud, the earliest of the flowering forest, were in bloom. He hailed them with the delight of an escaped captive. He said he came to a gentleman's house and found them playing cards. He asked for dinner, but said blunt Frank Asbury could not dine on cards; whereupon they politely put them aside. On his way to Rembert's his feet were steeped as he swam the creeks, but he seems not then to have experienced the ill effects of his exposure. Leaving Camden, he turned his course northwestwardly, aiming at the part of East Tennessee in which the Holston Conference was to meet. After he left Iredell Courthouse (now Statesville), in western North Carolina, he found himself in the rugged mountains, in the severe weather of early March. The exposure was very great. The weather was stormy, the streams were dangerous, the ascent of the mountains was made with great difficulty and the descent with greater. He had an inflamed limb; he was crippled with rheumatism; it was impossible for him to walk, and dangerous to ride. There were very poor accommodations for man or beast, and he was really a very sick man. He pressed on, however, to the seat of the Holston Conference and held the session. He intended to go on to Kentucky, but his brethren insisted that he should not attempt it;

Digitized by Microsoft®

and reluctantly, after sending Kobler to take his place there, he decided to try to reach Baltimore. He and his companions began their weary journey eastward. The fever returned and held him thirty hours. After a ride of forty miles, he reached the hospitable home of his lifelong friend, Madam Russell. One could not but hope that the sick and weary man would have rested here; but he preached the day after he came, and only remained two days, and then began his journey again. He found good homes along the way, and although he could make but slow progress, yet by riding ten and fifteen miles a day he managed to make the journey. His diet, he said, was tea, potatoes, gruel, and chicken broth; but in two months' time he had gone over the mountains and through the valleys to Baltimore. At the home of brother Hawkins, a mile from the city, he found a resting place.

His old friends in Maryland, rich and poor, crowded around him ministering to his comfort in every way in their power. He rode out every day, led a prayer meeting when he could, preached a few short sermons, and visited his old friends. The Goughs sent their chariot for him to come to Perry Hall, and he went and spoke freely about his soul to his old friend, who seems to have backslidden. He talked to the negro servants, wrote a few letters, and was able on Sunday to preach at Gough's. Mr. Gough now detailed a negro servant to go with him to Mr. Sheridan's in Cecil county, and he sent another with him to Wilmington, and from thence he went in his sulky to Philadelphia. He could not be idle, but all exertion threw him back. He, however, managed to get to the widow Sherwood's in New York; and find-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ing himself swelling in the face, bowels, and feet, he applied leaves of burdock and drew a desperate blister with a mustard plaster. He had such very sore feet that only after two weeks was he able to set them on the ground. He was confined for two weeks, when he made the effort to reach Wilbraham, Massachusetts; but he was not able to make the journey, and Joshua Wells went on for him while he recruited at the widow Sherwood's. He said he could write a little, but for two months he had not preached. He grew despondent, and complains gently that he is left too much alone. "Lord, help me," he says; "I am poor and needy. The hand of God hath touched me." A few days after this season of depression his sky was brighter. "The clouds," he says "are dispelled from my mind. Oh, that my future life may be holiness to the Lord! I wished to speak to a poor African whom I saw in the field. I went out, and as I came along on my return he was at a stone wall, eight or ten feet of me. Poor creature! He seemed struck at my counsel, and gave me thanks. Oh, it was going down into the Egypt of South Carolina after these poor souls of Africans, and I have lost my health, if not my life, in the end. The will of the Lord be done." The members of this good family were especially kind to him, and he mentions them by name. Mamma, Betsey, Jonathan, and Bishop deserve to be held in lasting memory for their great kindness to the suffering apostle.

He detailed Jesse Lee to travel with him, and together they began their journey southward. He was very unwell, and made no effort to preside at the Conference, leaving this office, as he says, to the presiding elders. He made the appointments, and man-

Digitized by Microsoft®

aged to preach a few times. After he had presided over the Baltimore Conference, he began his weary journey to the south; and sick as he was, he managed to keep in motion until after he had made half the journey to Charleston. He had reached Brunswick county, Virginia, when it became evident that if he attempted to go on he would likely forfeit his life, and reluctantly he yielded to the inevitable. For nearly twelve months he had been seriously ill, and yet he had persisted in working. But it was evident to all that if he ever did any more work he must now seek a shelter. So he prepared his plan of appointments for the South Carolina Conference and sent it by Jesse Lee to Jonathan Jackson, and resolved to lie by in Brunswick for the winter. He could not have found a better place for resting. Brunswick was the home of the Methodists. Here they had won their greatest victories. The people were all known to him, and were all his friends. He fixed his retreat at the home of Edward Dromgoole.

Edward Dromgoole was an Irishman; a local preacher who had traveled for some years and now was living on a plantation of his own. His circumstances were easy, and he was glad to give his old friend a home during these weary days of invalid life. Dr. Sims kindly attended him, and the local preachers, Lane, Moore, Smith, and Phillips, came to see him and cheer him up. He was in confinement here for three months. He was not confined to his bed, but was unable to go far from the house. The weather was very severe, and he was very feeble. He took fearful quantities of medicine. Tartar emetic in large doses was his favorite remedy, and the exhausted, feeble man was well bled by his

Digitized by Microsoft®

kind physician; and at last he took a diet, as he calls it, which was so remarkable that it deserves mention. It was one quart of hard cider; one hundred nails; a handful of snakeroot; a handful of pennell seed; a handful of wormwood. Boiled from one quart to a pint, one wine glassful was taken every morning for nine or ten days, the patient using no butter or milk or meat. He says, what one may well believe: "It will make the stomach very sick."

Confined to a quiet country home, he had much time for reflection, and he tried to solve some very hard questions. "How could God have condoned polygamy, slavery, and such like, under the earlier dispensation, and condemned them now?" He answered these questions perhaps as well as any others have been able to answer them. He drew the conclusion that while men may of two evils choose the least, Christians should of two evils choose neither. He was especially puzzled on the question of slave-owning. No man was ever more bitterly opposed to slavery; no man was on better terms with slave owners. They were his dearest friends, and in their piety he had the greatest confidence. They knew his views and respected them, but did not emancipate their slaves. Despite all his efforts, the sentiment in favor of immediate emancipation did not grow. He says: "I am brought to conclude that slavery will exist in Virginia perhaps for ages. There is not sufficient sense of religion nor of liberty to destroy it. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, in the highest flights of rapturous piety, still maintain and defend it." He realized the character of his peculiar situation — denouncing slavery, yet friendly with slave owners, and supported by the

Digitized by Microsoft®

proceeds of slave labor. And sometimes he frets under it, feeling that it almost made a slave of him, when he was free born.

He could do little. He wrote a few letters, read his Bible, and wrote up his journal. The class met at his home, and he ventured to give a short exhortation and a prayer. Despite his diet and his heroic doses of tartar, he did not recover his strength; and as he was confined to the house, he assisted the good dame in winding broaches and picking cotton. In those days there were no cotton gins, and the cotton which made the clothing was prepared by hand for the loom, and to the little children was committed the tedious task of winding broaches. The sick bishop spent his time in helping them in this work, and spent a little time in revising his journal. His brethren sent him loving letters, which cheered him up. His feebleness and his confinement depressed him; but while he was with the women and children, winding cotton and hearing them read Alleine and Doddridge, his soul was much blessed. The snow fell and he was low-spirited; but good Betsey and Nancy Pelham, young Virginian maids, helped him by reading to him Doddridge's Sermons to Young People.

Thus matters went on in Brunswick, where, in the homes of Pelham and Dromgoole, he spent the whole winter of 1797. He scorned to be idle, and spent his days in teaching the children grammar and in little tasks around the home until the last of March, when he began to venture out again. He was now so far recruited as to enter upon his work; and while he did not fully recover his strength, he was able to do efficient work for over ten years after this trying attack.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXV.

1798.

Asbury Out of His Sick Room—Recovery—Views on Slavery—On Local Preachers—Some of His Mistakes—Virginia Conference—O'Kelly—Tour Northward—Death of Dickins.

THE early spring of 1789 found Asbury able to stir out again. He was in the midst of slave owners, and these were his kind friends; but, as we have seen, he was by no means reconciled to slavery, and was as decided as ever that it should, if possible, be abolished; and when Philip Sands visited him, he consulted with him about taking some measures to drive it at least from the local ministry. There were few, perhaps none, of the traveling preachers who owned slaves or were likely to own any; but the local preachers, who were more numerous, and who were men of families, were, many of them, owners of plantations worked by slaves.

Asbury never seemed to think that a slave under the guardianship of a pious local preacher might have been better off than if he were free. He came to that conclusion in after years, but now he was for rooting the evil out by stern measures, and succeeded not in getting rid of slavery, but in driving from the Church some excellent people. "Some of our local preachers," he says, "complain that they have not a seat in the general Annual Conference. We answer, if they will do the duty of a member of the Annual Conference, they may have the seat and privilege of the traveling line. The local preachers

Digitized by Microsoft®

go where and when they please; can preach anywhere, or nowhere; can keep plantations and slaves; can receive fifty or a hundred dollars per year for marriages, and all the fees we receive we must return at the Conference." He was confident that the law for traveling preachers and that for lay preachers should be different.

Mr. Asbury was not very much given to look on two sides of a question at the same time. Indeed, to him moral questions had but two sides; one was the right, the other the wrong side, and he did not care to see any but the side he thought was right. He knew it was wrong for the ministry to be covetous or self-indulgent, or eager for human praise; and it never seemed to occur to him that in his effort to provide a ministry, who knew nothing but self-abnegation, he might educate a membership to grasp and hold and develop in themselves a selfishness which demanded everything and gave nothing. Some of his members in Maryland and Virginia could have paid the entire salary or quarterage of his preacher with a week's income, but that member would content himself with his quarterly contribution of a contemptible sum, and rejoice in the heroism of the self-sacrificing itinerant. Sixty-four dollars, and no more, was the allowance to pastor, bishop, or elder. If the people gave either of them anything, he must report that to the Conference, and it should be deducted from his stipend. If he was unfortunately married, his wife should have the same allowance, and his children not fourteen years old should have sixteen dollars. If over that, they must take care of themselves. He knew sixty-four dollars was enough for a single man with tastes as sim-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ple as his own; with that he could buy books and clothing and a horse now and then. If one had slaves he must free them, a farm he must leave it. In all this the good bishop saw only the noble spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of his guild, and by such demands he did develop a nobility of soul and an heroic unselfishness unsurpassed since the days of the early apostles. The effect upon the Church, however, was so harmful that it was a long time before a proper reaction came. Whether that reaction has not gone too far is a question still unsettled. The Baptists and the Quakers, in their opposition to a hireling ministry, were seconded by the early Methodists in their cheap gospel. The compulsory tax to support priests, levied over the entire country by the Established Church, aroused the spirit of opposition to a salaried ministry, which gave great excuse in after time for men to cover their avarice under the guise of religious simplicity. A fair biography must exhibit the weaknesses of the subject, if they exist, as well as the excellences, but Asbury's failings leaned to virtue's side. He had been a saddler—it was certainly not to his discredit that he had been; and poor, deranged William Glendening, who had an insane hostility to him, told it as if it was something to be ashamed of. Asbury says: "A friend of mine was inquisitive of my trade and apprenticeship, as William Glendening had reported. As he asked me so plainly, I told him that I counted it no reproach to have been taught to get my own living."

He was able to get to Salem in Brunswick, where the Virginia Conference met, and then rode slowly toward Baltimore, trying to preach as he went.

Digitized by Microsoft®

There was yet no Methodist church in the city of Richmond, but he preached in the courthouse. He reached Baltimore on the 25th of April. The Conference began May 2. He says: "It was half-yearly, to bring on an equality by the change from fall to spring. We had to correct the many offenses given at many Conferences to one particular man. I pleased myself with the idea that I was out of the quarrel; but no, I was in deeper than ever, and never was wounded in so deep a manner. It was as much as I could bear. I cannot stand such strokes."

I confess my inability to understand some of these allusions. Some one had wounded the sensitive sick man. Who that one was I do not know, but it is evident from other parts of his journal that Asbury was not able to separate the personal from the official, and counted all opposition to his measures as opposition to himself. He left Baltimore in his sulky, and without meeting with anything of special interest he reached Philadelphia and presided over his Conferences there and at New York, and visited New England. The cities gave him trouble; they wished, he said, to have the connection drafted, and some of the most acceptable preachers detailed to serve them. In New York he heard of his father's death. The good man was eighty-five years old; had lived well, and died happy. O'Kelly, after some years of persistent agitation, now attacked Asbury in a severe pamphlet. He had, Asbury said, taken the butt end of his whip to him, and among other charges he made was that Asbury wished to be called a bishop. The journal says: "James O'Kelly hath told a tale of me, which I think it is my duty to tell better. He writes, 'Francis ordered the preach-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ers to entitle him bishop in directing their letters.' The secret truth of the matter was this: The preachers having had great difficulties about the appellation of Mr. and Rev., it was talked over in the yearly Conference, for then we had no General Conference established. So we concluded that it would be by far the best to give each man his official title, as deacon, elder, and bishop. To this the majority agreed. James O'Kelly giveth all the good, the bad, and middling of all the order of our Church to me. What can be the cause of all this ill treatment, which I receive from him? Was it because I could not settle him for life in the South District of Virginia? Is this his gratitude? He was in this district for ten years as presiding elder, and there was no peace with James, until Dr. Coke took the matter out of my hands. After we had agreed to hold a General Conference to settle the dispute, and behold when the General Conference by a majority went against him, he treated the General Conference with as much contempt almost as he had treated me, only I am the butt of all his spleen."

He made quite an extensive tour through New England. He received small hospitality, and says: "We frequently spend a dollar a day to feed ourselves and horses. I never received as I recollect, any personal beneficence, no, not a farthing, in New England, and perhaps never shall, unless I shall be totally out of cash."

He now went to New Hampshire and Maine, and attended the first Conference ever held in Maine. Despite his fatigue, he improved in health. He met the New England Conference at Granville, and then returned southward.

Digitized by Microsoft®

His dear old friend, John Dickins, who passed safely through one epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia, had fallen a victim to another. "For piety, probity, profitable teaching, holy living, Christian education of his children, secret closet prayer," he says, "I doubt whether his superior is to be found in America."

His horse was worn down, but his friend Philip Rogers, converted under his ministry in Baltimore twenty years before, lent him another; and with Richard Whatcoat as a companion, he made his way by his usual route to Rembert's in South Carolina, where he spent a week; and after calling at Robert Bowman's, he came to Charleston, where he received a cooling letter from the north.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXVI.

1799.

Asbury in the Last Year of the Century—Charleston—North Carolina—Advice of Physicians—Feebleness of Whatcoat—Jesse Lee and Benjamin Blanton—Henry Parks—Tait's, Pope's, and Grant's—Extensive Tour Through Georgia—Charleston Again.

BISHOP ASBURY remained in Charleston a month, and then returned northward. To follow him every day would be a somewhat wearisome task to the general reader, but there is an interest attached to the names of persons and places along the route which makes the otherwise dull journal interesting. He went by Ragin's and Hawkins's, in South Carolina, into Bladen, in North Carolina, where he preached at Shallott Church; then by Town Creek, where his dear friends, Stephen Daniel and his good wife, used to entertain him; to Nixon and Stone Bay, and friend Johnson's; to William Bryan's and Colonel Bryan's; to Trenton, then to New Berne, and then twenty-four miles to Cox's, on Neuse River. I have given this extract from his journal merely to show how close was his attention to little things, as well as to present names which are still prominent in Southern Methodism. The people among whom he found his chief friends in South Carolina and North Carolina were nearly all of the same class—plain, independent, well-to-do farmers, with a few slaves, and a sufficient quantity of arable land on which to make a good living. They knew little

Digitized by Microsoft®

of luxury, but lived in comfort. They were independent yeomanry, who were generally of English descent, and most of whom had made what they had by hard toil. A few of the wealthy were Methodists, but the most of them had little use for Methodism, and Methodism less use for them and their ways. There was, however, a boundless hospitality, and from Charleston to Baltimore he had free entertainment.

He presided over the Conference in Baltimore, and then went to the eastern shore, going down to the lowest country in Maryland, and then through Delaware northward. He called a consultation of physicians in Delaware, and they advised that he should discontinue preaching entirely, because they feared a consumption or dropsy in the chest. He, however, pressed on through Philadelphia into eastern New York, and then back down the Hudson, stopping at Kinderhook, Rhinebeck, Albany, and Coeyman's landing, through rain and damp into New Jersey, and then through southern Pennsylvania into Maryland. He came through Loudoun, Berkley, Frederick, Shenandoah, Culpepper, Madison, Orange, Louisa, and Hanover, and thence to Richmond. He says: "I need much faith and good water." He found a pleasant retreat at John Ellis's, within two miles of Richmond, and would have preached in the walls of the new house at Richmond, but the heavy rain prevented.

He put a blister on his breast, and went on his way through Chesterfield, Powhatan, Cumberland, and Buckingham, into Prince Edward. The weather was hot, the blister was running, he had no rest night or day—no wonder he says, "I would not live always."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Poor, aged Whatcoat was with him. He had a sore on his leg, and Asbury a sore breast inside and out. John Spencer, however, gave them a good home, and he rested two days; then he rode into Halifax county, and had a large congregation on the Banister, and thence into Pittsylvania, and into North Carolina. He was now in Rockingham county, and through Rockingham, Stokes, and Guilford, sick and tired, he came into Rowan, and thence through Iredell, Wilkes, and Lincoln into York county, South Carolina. Benjamin Blanton met him there. His famous horse was dead of the staggers, and in four years the hard-working young elder had received two hundred and fifty dollars.

Bishop Asbury preached at Golden Grove, on the Saluda, where the land was rich, and at Cox's meetinghouse, where there was the best society in South Carolina, and went thence into Pendleton, "where Mr. James Nash and his family, though not in society, were our kindest friends."

He crossed the Savannah River at Cherokee ford, and came safe to William Tait's, in Elbert county, Georgia. He was attended by Jesse Lee, who was with him in all this journey, and by Benjamin Blanton. He rode in a covered gig, which was called "The Felicity," and kept dry, while Blanton and Lee took the rain. There was now at the forks, near Petersburg, a chapel, built by William Tait, who had moved from Cokesbury, in Maryland, and who was the father of Judge Tait; and here he was made exceedingly comfortable for a little time, and then, on a raw day, rode twenty miles, where he preached in a cold meetinghouse to a warm-hearted people, and where his friend Ralph Banks entertained him, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

his wife, the hearty young mother of thirteen children, gave him a Virginia welcome. Ralph Banks was one of the leading men of that country, and Asbury often afterwards found lodging at his home. Henry Parks, the father of William J. Parks, famous in Georgia, had been converted and built his cabin chapel in the woods of Franklin, and Asbury found it. He was now in a new country, just being settled by a body of sturdy immigrants from North Carolina and Virginia. The preachers came to Charles Wakefield's, in the new county of Oglethorpe, when poor Blanton broke down and went to bed with a high fever, and Asbury sent the hearty, happy, healthy Lee on to the head waters of the Oconee, while he stayed behind to nurse his sick companion, whom he housed in his carriage, and rode Blanton's stiff-jointed horse, that he would only ride, he said, "to save souls or the health of a brother." He went now to the hospitable home of Burrell Pope. These Popes, Henry and Burrell, had come from Virginia, and had a meetinghouse, in which the congregation, the journal says, "seemed more wealthy than religious."

He went on his tour, stopping at the widow Stewart's, and reaching the village of Greensboro, then quite a sprightly county town. Then to Burke's and to John Crutchfield's, and to Mark's meetinghouse, in the forks of Broad River, and to Hope Hull's and David Meriwether's, and to his old friend Thomas Grant's. They now turned their faces eastward, and passed the wagons laden with rum; and stopping at Thomas Haynes's and James Allen's, they rode once more into Augusta. The little city had much improved in every respect but religion. There was as

Digitized by Microsoft®

yet no organized religious body in it, though there was sometimes preaching. He heard a sermon in the morning and preached one in the afternoon, and over wretched roads he traveled on till he reached Charleston.

The itinerary I have given will perhaps only interest those who will take the map and mark the course he and his companion took. Journeys such as this will never be made again, and if made now would be vain labor. But Lee and Asbury planted seed as they went along which is ripening yet.

The Conference was soon held. There was really but little to do. The recital of religious experiences, the careful examination of character, the preaching, then the appointments, and all was over. There were now twenty-three members present in the Conference, whose work extended into three states, where, on his first visit, Lee and Willis and himself had begun the work only fifteen years before.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXVII.

1800.

Beginning of the New Century—Asbury Rests a Month—Washington's Death—Nicholas Snethen—General Conference—Great Revival—Whatcoat's Election as Bishop—Journey Northward.

AFTER a year of immense labor, during which he had traveled incessantly, Asbury now decided to rest for a month in the balmy air of Charleston. The South Carolina Conference convened on the first of January. The work was all hard and there was little choice in appointments, and so they were easily made. In no Conference was Asbury's administration recognized as wise to a greater degree than here. Jesse Lee was with him, to relieve him of much of the fatigue of preaching and of presiding, and in three days the Conference session closed.

While the Conference was in session the tidings came that Washington was dead. Asbury had met him twice. In company with Dr. Coke, he called on him once at Mount Vernon to get his signature to a petition to the Virginia legislature for the abolition of slavery, and dined with him; and a second time, in New York, after he was elected to the presidency, Coke and Asbury called to present him the address of the Conference. Other than this he had no communication with him, but he had for him the highest admiration. He calls him "the intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, the temporal savior of his

Digitized by Microsoft®

country, the matchless man." He paid a tribute to him in his Sunday sermon.

Asbury now decided to take a little needed rest, and Jesse Lee, who was strong and active, though he weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, took John Garvin with him and rode to St. Mary on Asbury's old gray. St. Mary was then the remotest English settlement in the United States. The weather was exceedingly severe, snow falling to the depth of eighteen inches in South Carolina. Nicholas Snethen, a gifted young Jerseyman, was with Asbury, and during the snowy weather read to the bishop from the sermons of Saurin. Asbury was not at all well, but kept up with his correspondence, preached occasionally, visited the Orphan House, which was then superior to any institution in America, and on Jesse Lee's return, after a rest of six weeks, he left Charleston. The roads were bad, the weather cold, and it was a week before he reached Rembert's, and went thence into North Carolina. Appointments had been sent ahead, and there was preaching every day. The journey was through the central part of North Carolina, and the travelers came by the rough roads to the university, to Raleigh, and through the upper counties into Virginia.

A friend asked him for the loan of fifty pounds. "He might as well have asked," he said, "for Peru. I showed him all the money I had in the world—twelve dollars—and gave him five." It was the same oft-told story of Virginia travel: wretched roads, bad weather, but hospitable homes and comfortable lodgings. He presided at the Virginia Conference, which met at Norfolk and remained in ses-

Digitized by Microsoft®

sion three days; he then pressed on toward Baltimore, where the General Conference was to meet. There was now quite a company of preachers, for Lemuel Andrews and William McKendree, as well as Snethen and Lee, were with him.

They made their way to Baltimore. There the fourth General Conference of the Methodists opened its work on the 6th of May, and continued in session two weeks. Dr. Coke was there and presided. Asbury had fully made up his mind to resign his office as bishop, and so expressed himself to his brethren, but they insisted so earnestly on his remaining a bishop that he consented to do so. It was evident that the American preachers did not wish to have Dr. Coke in Asbury's place, or even as his associate, and yet it was as evident that some one must be chosen for the place. Perhaps before the Conference met there had been little question as to who that associate should be, and that one was Jesse Lee. For two years he had been in training for this office, for which he had every qualification. He no doubt expected it, and Asbury was perhaps as confident as his traveling companion that he would be chosen; but the vote was cast, and there was a tie between Whatcoat and Lee. Another vote came later, and by a majority of four votes the feeble and aged Whatcoat, whom the Conference had refused to receive as bishop by Mr. Wesley's appointment, was elected. Mr. Asbury was Whatcoat's bosom friend. He believed, and truly, that there was no better man. He did not, it may be, do anything to elect him, or to defeat the strong and somewhat angular Lee, but he was neutral. A word from him would

Digitized by Microsoft®

probably have secured the result which Lee's friends expected. I think it unquestionable that Lee and his friends were seriously hurt with him, and while Bishop Asbury disclaimed saying anything to Lee's disparagement, Lee's defeat was largely attributed to his indifference. If he made a mistake, as many think he did, he suffered severely for it. Whatcoat was a good man, the country had in it no better; but save that he was a good man, and a good preacher, he seems to have had no other qualification for the episcopacy. He was sixty-four years old, in feeble health, and a man of such quiet, mystical spirit that he was utterly unsuited to taking the important command now devolving on him; and instead of relieving Asbury, he burdened him. The Conference did little more than make this election. It decided, however, that hereafter the preachers might have eighty dollars instead of sixty-four, and need not account for all their presents.

Asbury visited his old friend Rogers, at Greenwood, and then went to Gough's, and with Whatcoat began his northward journey.

The General Conference which had just adjourned was perhaps the most remarkable for the religious effect on the community of any which ever assembled in America. In Old Town—Baltimore—a great revival began, which continued during the entire session, and over one hundred professed conversion during the sitting of the Conference. This was the beginning in the east of that wonderful revival epoch which continued for nearly ten years, and which swept over the whole country. The revival fire was burning in Delaware, whither the two bishops went

Digitized by Microsoft®

to Conference; and at Dover the love feast began at eight and continued until four, and some people never left the house till midnight. At Duck Creek, a little country hamlet, where the preachers of the Philadelphia Conference assembled, a revival began, and over a hundred were converted. Asbury and his companion, however, hastened on to Wilmington, and then on to Chester, where the good Mary Withey still lived; and happily raised above her doubts, and rejoicing in God, she gladly received them, as she had the Lord's prophets for twenty-eight or twenty-nine years. Asbury was gladdened by the news which reached him from all sections. There were great revivals everywhere. He thought our Pentecost had come. In Edisto (South Carolina), Guilford (North Carolina), Franklin, Amelia, Gloucester (Virginia), Baltimore, Cecil (Maryland), Dover, Duck Creek, and Milford (Delaware), the work was glorious; and to add to his joy, to the astonishment of his friends as well as his own, his health was restored. In New York City, where the next Conference was held, there was a gracious revival. One evening the services continued till after midnight, and twenty souls found the Lord. He made his annual visit to the Sherwood farm, and found that his dear old nurse, Betsy Sherwood, was gone to glory. He made his usual tour through New England. It is very evident that the land of the Puritans was not to his taste, but there were many things among the people he thought very praiseworthy. The roads were built for ages, and the simplicity and frugality of the New England matron were admirable. "She, as a mother, mistress, maid, or wife, is a worthy woman. Here

Digitized by Microsoft®

are no noisy negroes running and laughing. If you wish breakfast at six or seven, there is no setting the table an hour before the breakfast can be produced." He made his way to the place of Conference session in Massachusetts and congratulated himself that after riding thirteen hundred miles he had finished the six Conferences in seven months. He did not relish the compulsory church tax, and when he rode through Weston and saw the grand steeple and porches, and even the stalls for the horses, he says: "It is well if they do not make the Methodists pay to support their pomp. Oh, religion in New England!"

The tour was a long one, leading the two bishops through New England during the hot days of the summer. Poor Whatcoat found it hard work to keep up with his senior colleague, and came so near fainting that Asbury had to give up his carriage to him. He now returned through Connecticut, and joined Garrettson. The saintly lady of Livingston Manor, who had been the first to invite the Methodist preachers to Rhinebeck and receive them into her home, was dead. She gave her daughter, Catherine, to a Methodist preacher, but never herself left the Reformed Church, in which she had been converted. The two bishops returned to New York City, and, preaching on the way, went through New Jersey into Pennsylvania, and reached Baltimore again by the first of September. On every breeze Asbury heard news of victory, and he shouts, "Glory! glory! glory!" Perhaps six hundred souls had been converted in Maryland alone since the General Conference.

After traveling through Maryland he came into

Digitized by Microsoft®

Loudoun, Virginia, and here mentions for the first time his visit to the widow Roszel. She was the saintly mother of that great man Stephen George Roszel, who in obedience to his mandate began to travel a circuit. He came to Rectortown, and the hospitable gentry did the best thing for the two bishops they knew. They gave them a barbecue, or, as Asbury calls it, a green-corn feast, with a roasted animal, cooked and eaten out of doors under a booth. The next barbecue he came to was not intended for the bishops, since there was a horse race attached to it. His journey was through the midst of Virginia, and he mentions a visit to Lynchburg, then a sprightly young town on the James, where he preached in a town hall. Through the hills they rode to Liberty, now Bedford City, where he found the people so anxious to see a live bishop that they gathered around his carriage as if he had a cake-and-cider cart. He preached in the courthouse, and went to brother Paterson's and to Blackwell's.

He then climbed the mountains of Botetourt and went to Fincastle. He was on his way to the Holston country, and rode to Christians, now Christiansburg, and down the line of the present Norfolk and Western railway through Wytheville, Abingdon, and what is now Bristol, and rested at his old friend Van Pelt's in East Tennessee. Here he left his tired horse and, with another furnished by his host, began his journey to Kentucky. It had been several years since he had made a visitation to this then remote section. McKendree was now with the bishops, and together they crossed the mountains, and riding one hundred and forty miles, they reached the new school

Digitized by Microsoft®

projected by Francis Poythress and known as Bethel. Asbury was much dejected at the prospect. Here in an obscure place, surrounded by the Kentucky River in part, was a large, expensive building, only partly finished. The lowest sum which could keep the school designed at work would be £300, without which it would be useless, and there was in sight neither funds nor principal nor pupils. Poythress had worn himself out, and was to be relieved. The work in Kentucky had grown much in interest, and demanded a careful supervision. Settlers by thousands had poured into the new state, and while there were not many Methodists among them, so few that in traveling two or three hundred miles he had only been entertained in six homes, yet there was an imperative call to provide for the surging immigration. After a few days at Bethel, the bishops and their companion, McKendree, struck out through the newly-opened country for the settlements on the banks of the Cumberland. They made their way through the prairies, then known as the barrens, and soaked by rain and exhausted by fatigue they at last reached Nashville, the new town on the Cumberland River. The pioneers had been here before them, and a new church was projected. It was to be of stone; it would hold when completed a thousand people; it was as yet neither floored, ceiled, nor glazed. He now came in contact with the celebrated coalition between Presbyterians and Methodists, which created such a sensation and brought about such results, in which the McGees, Craig, Hodge, Rankin, and Adair took part with the Methodist McGee and others of the early Methodist preachers. The camp

Digitized by Microsoft®

meeting was now begun by these people, and Asbury, Whatcoat, and McKendree were at the close of one held at Drake's meetinghouse. There were a thousand present on the week-day and two thousand on Sunday. The stand was in the open air, in a grove of beech trees. At night fires were blazing here and there, and the religious excitement rose high, and the services were protracted into the midnight. Asbury was delighted that God was visiting the sons of the Puritans, who, he says somewhat complacently, were candid enough to acknowledge their obligations to the Methodists. The travelers were now compelled to return to the east, going by a route which led them through the Indian nation. They entered the white settlements, and finally reached Knoxville. As yet there was no Methodist church there, and Asbury preached to about seven hundred persons in the statehouse. Two days' riding on horseback brought him to Van Pelt's, where he had left his horse and chaise. His host, who had come to these wilds from New York, kindly took care of him until he and his companions had recruited, and then they made their way by what is now the railway route by Paint Rock and Asheville toward the east. He was walking over the mountain at Paint Rock, and his horse, which was led by another, reeled and fell over, taking the chaise with him. The horse turned a complete somersault, and the carriage was as completely turned over, but by a heavy lift they were both righted, and, strange to say, neither horse nor carriage had received any serious damage. Without further accident they reached Asheville. He had now pretty well made the entire circuit, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

found himself in November near the same point he had passed in January.

He had wonderfully recovered his strength, and his religious life had a sereneness which was not usual to him, but he was not as strong as he thought he was, and these labors told upon him. The journey through the mountains, however, was not yet over, and the travelers pressed on into what is now Pickens, South Carolina; then into Georgia, where they made a circuit of almost half the then settled part of the state; and then into South Carolina again, bringing up at Camden, where the South Carolina Conference was to hold its session.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1801.

Troubles About Slavery—Death of Jarratt—Northern Tour—Revival Days—Southern Tour—Charleston Again.

THE bishop had made the entire circuit of the Conferences without any failure to meet each on time, and the new year of 1801 found him at Camden. Isaac Smith, his old friend at whose home he made an annual halt, had settled in this little village, and had established a Methodist society and built a church, and now with two others he proposed to entertain the South Carolina Conference. The Conference remained in session for five days and then adjourned. The bishops decided to rest a few days, but on January 9th started on their northward journey. They entered into North Carolina, and then returned into South Carolina and made quite a tour through that state. The General Conference had made a very decided utterance on the question of negro slavery, and it had aroused great hostility to the Methodists in South Carolina. Asbury indorsed the utterance fully, but felt the embarrassment under which it placed him and his brethren. He advised that by increasing effort and faithful preaching they should live down the prejudice against them. He said nothing could so effectually alarm some of the citizens of South Carolina against the Methodists as the address of the General Conference. "The rich among the people never thought us worthy to preach

Digitized by Microsoft®

to them; they did indeed give their slaves liberty to hear, and join our Church, and now it appears that the poor African will no longer have this privilege." No wonder that Asbury afterwards doubted the wisdom of a course which had produced such a result. Bishop Whatcoat had been with him since his election in May; indeed, it is evident that Asbury was not willing to give into any other hands the work or any part of it which he had so long directed. He was willing enough to have Whatcoat with him to relieve him of the labor of preaching, but he had little confidence in his ability to plan and arrange the work. Generally there were two sermons a day. Whatcoat followed Asbury, or Asbury followed Whatcoat, and three hours were often taken up by the service. They made their way through lower North Carolina, and at Wilmington Asbury was invited to preach in the St. James Episcopal Church, which he did to a large congregation. The route pursued by the bishops was the one so often taken by Asbury in going to and from Charleston, and the journey was void of any special interest. The Virginia Conference was to meet at Dromgoole's April 1, and the two bishops were engaged in preaching in eastern North Carolina and eastern Virginia until the session commenced. The congregations at the Conference were very large. While the preachers were holding their indoor session the people were being preached to out of doors; and on Sunday, while Asbury was preaching in the house, William Ormond was preaching outside.

His old friend Devereaux Jarratt was dead. This Episcopal minister was the first man to preach the

Digitized by Microsoft®

doctrines of Methodism in Virginia. He had been alienated from the Methodists in latter years, but was never in good accord with his own Episcopal brethren. He loved Asbury, and between them there was never any discord or even coolness. The good old clergyman had been cruelly wounded by Dr. Coke, and especially by some things in Coke's journal; but as the time came for him to go to the world beyond, his affection for Asbury grew stronger, and when he died his wife requested Asbury to preach his funeral sermon, which he did. He hurried northward to the Conference in Maryland, which met at Pipe Creek. Here, Asbury says, Mr. Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland and in America. The effort to give any other meaning to this expression than it bears has not been successful; and while the argument in favor of the first society in America having been formed in New York is not to be despised, it cannot very well stand against this positive statement of Asbury's, made after that in the Discipline by himself, and Dr. Coke, in which he gave to the New York society the priority.

The Baltimore Conference remained in session four days, and the bishops spent the interval between the adjournment and the beginning of the Philadelphia Conference in visiting the churches on the eastern shore. One day Asbury preached and Whatcoat exhorted, and the next day Whatcoat preached and Asbury exhorted; and thus they went on toward Philadelphia. He mentions a little incident, illustrating the character of those primitive days, that is worth reciting. A Mr. Hughes, an Irish Methodist, had conducted a school, and the bishop

Digitized by Microsoft®

was urged to go to the examination. He went, and was greatly pleased at the pedagogue's success. The master had provided a medal, but the committee thought it proper to keep it for a future examination, and a subscription in money was taken to furnish the children each with a small silver piece, and so make them equal in a "free country." The bishop's foot was seriously inflamed, but Dr. Physick applied caustic; and while he was crippled for two months, the treatment was effective for his final cure.

The Philadelphia society was sadly divided. Asbury had been harassed by the condition of things there even while in South Carolina; but here, confined to his room and forced to contend with the sons of Belial who had so wretchedly divided the Church, it was specially trying. After two months' stay in Sodom, as he calls Philadelphia, he began his tour among the churches, and went direct to Baltimore. Here he found things in a very cheering condition, for at Perry Hall, where Mr. Gough had a chapel, he found a revival going on.

He was to join Bishop Whatcoat in Frederick. He made his journey among his old friends and met Whatcoat at Fredericktown, and they mapped out the work. Bishop Whatcoat was to go eastward and Asbury, with Nicholas Snethen, was to go westward. He went up the valley, preaching at Winchester, Woodstock, Harrisburg, Staunton, Fairfield, and Lexington. This beautiful section was populated largely by Presbyterians, but the Methodists had established themselves all through the country, even then. The travelers came again to Madam Russell's. Snethen, his young companion, who after-

Digitized by Microsoft®

wards was one of the great men of the Methodist Protestant Church, was a preacher of great power, and as he was a vigorous man, he relieved the feeble bishop of much labor. While he had hoped the year before that he had fully recovered, he was painfully reminded of his weakness by a return of the same trouble; but his will kept him in motion, and in spite of mountains and execrable roads he made his way to Ebenezer in the Holston country, where the Conference met. In reaching this place he passed through the beautiful Elk Garden, and Snethen preached in the church. Here, in this remote part of southern Virginia, shut in by the mountains, there were valleys of matchless fertility, and hills clad in richest robes of native blue grass. A class of excellent people had settled here and built a church. Asbury sought them out. The route to East Tennessee was through the rugged Alleghanies, and it was only after a week of hard riding that they reached the seat of the Conference. At that time the Kentucky country and the Holston were in the same Conference, but such was the revival in Kentucky that the preachers in that section were not able to leave the work. McKendree was now in charge of this Kentucky District, as it is written in the minutes, and had a diocese extending from the banks of the Scioto to the Holston and from the Alleghanies to the Mississippi. Snethen did most of the preaching, but Asbury was able to fill the appointment on Sunday, when there was much praise and shouting.

The circuit of the Conferences was now over, and, with his eloquent young brother, Asbury came southward on an evangelistic tour through the connection.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Asbury was in his own view a Pauline bishop, and certainly no bishop of the primitive Church was ever more abundant in labors. Crossing the mountains of North Carolina, he came through the western counties of the state into the upper part of South Carolina; and preaching every day, they made their way through Greenville, Laurens, Spartanburg, Newberry, and Edgefield to Augusta, Georgia. After years of fruitful and fitful work on the part of others, Stith Mead, a young Virginian, whose family resided in Augusta, had by his earnest ministry organized a society in Augusta, and by giving five hundred dollars of his own money for a lot he had succeeded in securing a subscription sufficient to build in the city what Asbury thought a very large and most elegant house. It was a plain, barn-like wooden building which is now owned by the negroes of the Springfield Baptist Church. There was earnest preaching by Snethen, who excited considerable attention, but there were no conversions. They left the city and went on through Columbia and Wilkes counties. Bishop Whatcoat had joined them, and while he went on to the southern part of the state, Asbury and Snethen went northward. This part of Georgia was now thickly settled with excellent people from Virginia and Maryland, and churches had been built all over the country. They were homely houses of logs, almost universally, but as good as the residences of the people. Asbury said: "The people, however, are extremely kind. I have experienced great sensible enjoyment of God; our cabins are courts when Jesus is there."

The two bishops now agreed to divide out the ter-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ritory, one going east, the other west, and Asbury struck out for the frontier, the more westerly counties in Georgia. Stith Mead was a great revivalist, and in the rural districts of Georgia religious excitement ran very high. At Little River the meeting held for eight hours. In Warren they held a meeting from nine in the morning till three o'clock in the afternoon. These new central counties of Georgia were then bordering on the Indian nation. They were very fertile, and many settlers from Virginia and Maryland were crowding into them. Asbury went to the very border of the Indian country, and then turned his face eastward and made his way by the oft-traveled route to Charleston. There are now (1896) in lower South Carolina churches still standing in the pine forests and swamps which Asbury visited on this journey.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXIX.

1802.

Northward Again—A View of the Virginia Conference—Baltimore—His Mother's Death—Meeting with O'Kelly—Over the Alleghanies—Exposure in Tennessee—Sickness—McKendree—Reaches Camden and Rembert's.

THE Conference convened at Camden again, and when it adjourned, with Nicholas Snethen the good bishop turned his face northward, and preaching as they went, Snethen and himself came to Salem in Brunswick county, Virginia, where "the close Conference was held for four days. There was great strictness observed in the examination of the preachers' characters. Some were reproved before the Conference for their lightness and other follies." This extract from his journal gives us a glimpse into the usages of those times which have long since passed away. There was no open session. There was but little to do except to examine character, and it was done with rigid strictness. The name of the preacher was called, and if there was anything against him that was the time to speak. The incidents related by the old preachers show how strict they were in their examination of each other. One young man was complained of because he had put on a girl's bonnet, and asked if she was not a pretty girl; one had shaved on Sunday, and one had not shaved off all his beard; one wore a dress coat; one was too light in his conversation, and one was too dressy in apparel—these as well as more serious

Digitized by Microsoft®

things were brought out in these secret sessions; but as a general thing there was commendation, rather than censure. Philip Bruce, Jesse Lee, Jonathan Jackson, and Nicholas Snethen, a thundering legion, were preaching from the pulpit to the great crowds that came to Conference "while this secret session" was being held, and there was, the bishop said, "a great shaking." As soon as this Conference was over the bishop and his companions were on their way to the next Conference which met in Baltimore. This was Asbury's favorite Conference, the strongest and best of them all. All the quarterage this year was paid, three thousand souls had been added to the society, money was raised to buy horses for poor preachers, and donations made to those who had long distances to go.

It was while he was in Baltimore that he received the account of his dear mother's death. He had left her thirty-one years before, and he had never gone back to see her again. She had fully surrendered him to his work, nor asked him to leave it. He had not neglected his old parents, but had ministered to them. His letters had been regular and his remittances as generous as he had been able to make them. She died January 8, 1802, aged eighty-seven or eighty-eight years.

The Philadelphia Conference had been in some trouble. The golden days when Churches will be always at peace are to come yet; they had not come in 1802. Asbury was delighted, however, when the difficulty, of which we know nothing, was settled. His tour northward led him into New England again, and he went as far north as New Hampshire. He

Digitized by Microsoft®

was not a little indignant that Methodists had to pay tax for the support of the standing order, not perhaps considering the fact that this compulsory support of the Congregational clergy was doing not a little to drive men into the Methodist fold. He came by his old friend Garrettson's on the Hudson, who had the most elegant home of any Methodist preacher on the continent, and returning to the south he took Nicholas Snethen, whom he had had as a traveling companion the year before, as his associate again, and made his way to the Valley of Virginia. In passing through Winchester, as he was going southward, he heard that James O'Kelly was in the village and was sick. Asbury sent him word that he would call and see him if it was agreeable, and the two old men met once more. They made no allusion to differences. Asbury prayed for his old friend, and they parted to meet no more on earth.

He now moved up the valley, preaching as he went. It was a time of revival, and nothing so delighted him as lively, noisy meetings, and they were to be found all along the route. He went on through Botetourt to the Salt Works, where, he said, there was a little salt, but when sister Russell was gone he thought there would be a deficiency. Then he entered the Holston country, preaching every day. Near Jonesboro, Tennessee, he attended a camp meeting. William McKendree, who was the presiding elder of the Western District, now joined him and accompanied him toward the Conference, which was to meet at Station Camp, in Roane county. They had to camp out in the woods, and lying too far from the camp fire, he caught cold, and as a result his

Digitized by Microsoft®

throat became involved. He was soon a very sick man, but McKendree nursed him tenderly. He grew worse, rheumatism followed, and sick as he was they were forced to camp in the mountains. McKendree made a tent for him out of his blankets, where he caught a little sleep. By an unfortunate accident he was hurt severely in his feet, and was unable to get on or off his horse without help. McKendree lifted him like a sick child in his arms and bore him into the houses at which they stopped, but despite it all that unconquerable man preached at a meeting appointed for him. At Justice Huffaker's he heard that Snethen had gone to fill his appointments in Georgia, and he then consented to rest a week. Then he clambered over the mountains, and with incredible difficulty reached South Carolina and came to Rembert's, where he remained for ten days, and here spent the closing days of the year 1802. McKendree, who accompanied him on this tour a considerable part of the way, was his trusted corps commander; and a few years before when Francis Poythress lost his mental balance, Asbury had ordered him to Kentucky. He went just in time. That wonderful revival which marks the close of the last century and the beginning of this had just begun when he reached the field. Never was there a greater demand for a cool head and a strong arm, and McKendree had them in a high degree. We shall see him often in the future.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXX.

1803.

The South Carolina Conference—Scotch in North Carolina—Mr. Meredith's Work in Wilmington—Cumberland Street Church in Norfolk—Northward Journey—Merchandise of Priests in Boston—Southward Again—Trip to Ohio—Kentucky—Dr. Hinde and His Blister—Journey to Charleston—Conference at Augusta.

THE South Carolina Conference met at Camden in January, 1803. It met on Saturday, and remained in session till Wednesday. This had been a year of great revivals, and over three thousand had united with the Church in the bounds of this Conference. Asbury read the appointments, as was his custom, and then mounted his horse and rode immediately away. He went at once to Charleston, and after a few days there, with his companions took the oft-traveled road through Georgetown and through the pines of South Carolina into North Carolina. Snethen, young, vigorous, and eloquent, did most of the preaching; but the bishop preached now and then, and generally on "Christian Perfection," which he was still striving to attain. He says: "I feel it my duty to speak chiefly on perfection, and above all to strive to attain that which I preach." Through mud and cold,-preaching in houses open as a sieve, they made their way in the pine forests of North Carolina. After the battle of Culloden, in Scotland, many of the malcontented Highlanders who were on that ill-fated field were exiled to the colony of North Caro-

Digitized by Microsoft®

lina, and in Bladen, Robinson, and Cumberland counties they had their homes. They had ministers of the Kirk, from Scotland, to preach to them. They read their Gaelic Bibles and sang their Gaelic hymns. They were a thrifty, religious people, and prospered. In Fayetteville they had a strong hold. Here, through the agency of Henry Evans, a colored man, the Methodists had not only gathered a society of blacks and a few whites, but they had built a small chapel. In Wilmington, also, Mr. Meredith had gathered a society of seven hundred blacks and a few whites, and a little two-room parsonage was built on the church lot. The negroes here hired their time of their masters, and were growing in wealth. At this time (1896), nearly a hundred years since Asbury preached there, not only have the whites several handsome churches, but the descendants of these negroes have some of the largest and handsomest churches in the city.

They rode for miles through slashes, or through wild pine forests with now and then a cabin, and at night lodged in the humble home of some poor settler. The bishop evidently found the people of Onslow county, through which he passed, rather hard to move, for he says: "I conclude I shall have no more appointments between Wilmington and New Berne. There is a description of people we must not preach to. The people of Onslow seem to resemble the ancient Jews, 'they please not God, and are contrary to all men.'"

In New Berne they rested for a few days, then went northward. "In Williamston there were twenty families, in Tarborough there were thirty-three,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and the people had more trade than religion. In Halifax there was a decent and respectable congregation from the forty families there." The Conference met at Dromgoole's, in Virginia, and after a session of five days closed in great peace. There was preaching out of doors, although it was in March. Whatcoat, then quite a feeble man, was with him on this tour.

Then eastward they rode to Norfolk and Portsmouth. He says: "The new church in Cumberland street, Norfolk, is the best in Virginia belonging to our society. The pulpit is high, with a witness, like that awkward thing in Baltimore, calculated for the gallery, and high at that." In Petersburg he found them building a new church, sixty by forty, and two stories high. He went now to Baltimore, stopping as usual on the way to preach as often as possible. The Conference met in Baltimore April 1; there was preaching three times every day. After the session he went to Perry Hall, and then made a short visit to his old friends in Harford, and through storms of wind and snow on through northern Maryland to the eastern shore. He stops long enough to say: "My mind is in a great calm. I have felt much self-possession; indeed, age, grace, and the weight of responsibility of one of the greatest charges upon earth, ought to make me serious. In addition to this charge of superintendence, I strive to feel and live perfect love."

As he went through the eastern shore on his way to the meeting of the Philadelphia Conference, which met at Duck Creek, he could not but rejoice in the changes which had passed over that section since

Digitized by Microsoft®

he had first entered it. He loved the eastern shore of Maryland, and as long as he lived paid it an annual visit, and now he saw everywhere the fruits of his early labors. The Conference met at Duck Creek town, and in a Quaker meetinghouse. He seems to have had an unusual rest from bodily affliction for some time, but when he reached Duck Creek town he had to submit to tooth-drawing, cathartics, and bleeding; but despite it all he sat in the Conference for the four days of its session. Early in May he left for New York, and preached in his old church home at John Street, and took legal steps to secure a legacy made by Miss De Peyster.

Without any special adventure he reached Connecticut. If the Methodists were now disposed to fret at the legal support given to the clergy of the standing order, the Baptists were not so submissive, and supposing the Methodists would join with them, they sent a request to Asbury and Whatcoat to petition the legislature for relief. But Asbury said: "We are neither popes nor politicians; let our brethren assert their own liberties."

At length he reached Boston, where, with eighteen members present, the New England Conference met in the solitary little chapel. Joshua Soule was ordained an elder at this Conference. The great want of Boston, Asbury said, was "good religion and good water; but how can this city and Massachusetts be in any other than a melancholy state—worse, perhaps, for true piety than any other part of the Union? What! reading priests and alive! no; dead, by nature, by formality, by sin." "I will not mention names, but I could tell of a congregation which

Digitized by Microsoft®

sold their priest to another in Boston for one thousand dollars and hired the money out at the unlawful interest of twenty-five or thirty per cent. Lord, have mercy upon the priest and people who can think of buying the kingdom of heaven with money! How would it tell in the south that priests were among the notions of Yankee traffic?" This priest thus disposed of was the father of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is evident that Mr. Asbury did not have a high estimate of New England piety; and between the contempt of the standing order for the fanatical Methodists, and the want of faith which the Methodists had in the standing order, there was but little room to choose. Jesse Lee began fifteen years before the work of hammering away on the Saybrook platform, and there had now followed him a body of sterling young men who were doing the same work; and despite the fact of the establishment and its taxes, the societies grew and the preachers multiplied. There were among them Sylvester Hutchinson, Martin Ruter, Joshua Soule, Daniel Ostrander, and Elijah Hedding. They had been distributed in all parts of the New England states, and were winning their way more and more each year. At this time New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut had not been drawn upon by the richer fields of Ohio and the farther west, and Asbury found the rural sections full of sturdy people who lived in solid comfort. It must be said in justice to New England that the good bishop was a little given to somewhat harsh judgments upon Calvinists and a well-paid clergy, and that he had little use for read sermons, and was a very Quaker in his dislike of steeples and bells.

Digitized by Microsoft®

From New England he came through New York back to Philadelphia, where he made ready for his journey to the far west. He turned his face to the west and passed through the lower tier of counties in Pennsylvania. Henry Boehm, a German, whose father, Martin Boehm, had been driven from the Mennonites because of his pietist views, and who had joined the Methodists, went with him as a traveling companion, preaching in German to his countrymen, of whom there were many. The bishop says of this part of Pennsylvania in which they were now traveling: "I feel and have felt for thirty-two years for Pennsylvania, the most wealthy, and the most careless of God and the things of God, but I hope God will shake the state and the churches. There are now upward of twenty German preachers; some have connected with Mr. Otterbein and Martin Boehm, but they want authority and the Church wants discipline." In Pittsburg the Methodists had no church, and he preached in the courthouse.

Poor Whatcoat, who had been with him, was not able to go farther, and the saintly and useful Wilson Lee was compelled also to leave him; but Asbury went on his way with young Boehm, crossing through Ohio county, Virginia, into the new state of Ohio. He was himself suffering with dysentery, and the journey was a trying one, but he kept on his way. In Ohio the Church was making rapid progress. Governor Edward Tiffin was a Methodist and a local preacher. Asbury visited him, and on the 28th of September crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky. He passed rapidly to Mount Gerizim, where the Kentucky Conference was to hold its session.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Here the Western Conference, which embraced the Holston, the Middle Tennessee, and the Kentucky and Ohio country, held its session. McKendree was in charge of the Kentucky District, and men like William Burke, Thomas Wilkerson, Lewis Garrett, James Gwin, Tobias Gibson, Jesse Walker, and Henry Smith were among the workers. It was a time of revival, and there was preaching every day, and twenty souls were converted. Asbury was quite unwell, but he pressed on, passing through Paris, Kentucky, which had in it even then about four hundred houses and a stone preaching house of the Presbyterians. He visited Dr. Hinde, the grandfather of Bishop Kavanaugh, once a surgeon under General Wolfe, and an infidel. The doctor had married into a Virginia family, and when his wife was awakened among the Methodists, he had blistered her head to cure her of her madness; but he was converted, and was now a Methodist. The highways were crowded with travelers, and while they may have broken the spell of loneliness they by no means improved the character of the roads, and as he returned Asbury found the way through the Gap into Tennessee but little better than when he came over it the first time fifteen years before. He could endure a great deal of discomfort without complaint; indeed, one has to know much of the times and of the topography of the country in order to realize what he did endure, but the story of his hardships will sometimes come out in his narrative. Stopping now at a house unfinished and filled with brutal travelers, and then in a little house ten by twelve feet in size, where there were within a man and his wife and six children—

Digitized by Microsoft®

one of them always in motion—and without there were rain and wind; sleeping in beds from which he contracted a royal but rather nameless disorder, against which a brimstone shirt was his only protection, and then pushing across the mountains, over the worst road in America, he at last reached a resting place; but he says, "My soul is tranquil, the air is pure, and the house of God is near." The remainder of the trying journey was through the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina until he finally reached father John Douthat's, in South Carolina, where he bade farewell for awhile, as he said, to the "filth, fleas, rattlesnakes, hills, mountains, rocks, and rivers." He now went across the western part of South Carolina, and going through Greenville, Laurens, and Richland counties, he came into Columbia, like an Indian chief, with his blanket around him to protect him from rain, and went to John Harper's, in whose house he held a family union, preaching to a respectable body of hearers. The South Carolina Conference was to meet in Augusta, but, as always, he visited Charleston, and now took possession of the parsonage, the first in the South Carolina Conference; or, as he calls it, "the new house built for the preacher, near the new chapel." This little parsonage is described by Bishop Andrew in his "Reminiscences": "The old, odd-shaped house defying all sorts of architectural style, was a house of shreds and patches, and stood almost touching Bethel church. Below stairs was the dining-room stuck up in one corner; at the other you went into the yard, from a little cuddy in which was the water pail; but the grand room of the lower story was the Confer-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ence room. In this was transacted all the business of the session. Here you met every week either stewards or leaders, white or black; and here the preachers had to have all cases of complaints or trial, especially among the blacks; and to this room also came, at stated intervals, all who wished to join on trial. Here Asbury had prayer at sunrise for all who came."

After a two weeks' rest in Charleston, he made his way by the old route to Augusta, where the South Carolina Conference was to hold its session, which it did in the January following. Among the exiles from Hayti was a Frenchman, Peter Cantalon. He became a Protestant and a Methodist, and at his home the Conference was held. As there was a month between the Conferences, Asbury went up the country and made an extensive tour through all the settled portions of the state. He was entertained in Louisville by Mr. Flournoy. He speaks of Flournoy as a new convert. Alas! his conversion was not of long duration; but his wife, to whom the bishop alludes as one of "the respectables," and who was one of the famous Cobb family, long continued to bless the Church by a beautiful and saintly life. She was the aunt of Howell Cobb, and the grandmother of Rev. H. J. Adams, and a kinswoman of Chief Justice Jackson. Bishop Coke had joined Asbury in Augusta, and they were together for the session of the Conference, which began on January 4, 1804.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXI.

1804.

Conference in Augusta—Reasons for Never Marrying—Journey Northward—General Conference—Slavery Question Again—Confined by Sickness—Letter to Hitt—Journey to the West, and Thence to Charleston.

THE new year began with the meeting of the South Carolina Conference in the home of Peter Cantalou, on Ellis street in Augusta. It opened its session on Monday and closed on Thursday, and the next Monday Asbury reached Camden, where, at the house of one of his brethren (probably Isaac Smith's), he parted with Dr. Coke, giving him a plan for a journey as far as Boston before the General Conference met in May. After a week in Camden he began his tour to the east by riding to James Rembert's, where he rested for a week, and then went as far south as Georgetown. After years of hard work in Georgetown, there were only twenty whites in the society, but there were four hundred blacks. Mr. Hammett had built a church there which now fell into the hands of Asbury, as had the churches in Charleston and Wilmington. With Alex. McCaine as a traveling companion, he went northward.

He was now sixty years old. He had decided never to marry, and when he was in Georgetown he wrote in his journal the reason for this final decision. He was twenty-six years old when he came to America,

Digitized by Microsoft®

and it had not been a proper thing to marry up to that time. He expected to return to England in five years, but it was ten years before his return could be considered, because of the war. Then he was chosen bishop. His duties demanded constant travel, and he could not think it was just or kind for him to marry one whom he must leave for so much of the time. His salary was small; his mother needed all the help he could give her, and he was an old man when she died. He hoped God and the sex would forgive him if he had done wrong in thus remaining unmarried.

His journey into South and North Carolina was through the counties on the coast. He visited Wilmington, New Berne, Washington, Edenton, and Elizabeth City—where there was as yet no home for the Methodists—and through Norfolk and Suffolk back into the circuit he had traveled thirty years before to Salem, in Mecklenburg, where the Virginia Conference held its session. The Baltimore Conference was to meet in Alexandria, and he rode directly through the midland counties of Virginia to its place of session. The new church was then built, and he preached in it, and after a short session the Conference adjourned. The General Conference was to meet in May. Asbury had little taste for changes of any kind, and he did not relish these quadrennial sessions when the Discipline was to be revised from beginning to end. He was sorry when the Conference assembled and relieved when it adjourned.

The presiding eldership had not given perfect satisfaction, and there were attempts made, he said, "upon the ruling eldership." He says, "We had

Digitized by Microsoft®

great talk." It is the province of the historian to tell of the doings of this Conference, which was one of the last general conventions which was held. This Conference consisted of one hundred and twelve members, and the inequality of the representation is seen by the figures: The Boston Conference, four; Virginia Conference, seventeen; Baltimore Conference, twenty-nine; Philadelphia Conference, forty-one; New York Conference, twelve.

Dr. Coke was present. Asbury, according to the journals, made several motions: first, that the doors should be kept closed; second, that an assistant book agent should be chosen; and third, that the Annual Conferences should be advised to restrict the preachers from preaching improper matter.

The Conference desired that he should assist in forming a chapter on slavery to suit northern and southern sections. Asbury knew the absurdity of the proposition, and decided to have no part in it. A committee attempted it, and egregiously failed. Up to this time there had been no limit to the bishop's authority to appoint preachers for as long a time as he chose, but George Dougherty moved that a time limit be fixed, and it was decided that it should be at two years. The General Conference of 1800 had been the revival Conference, and Asbury hoped for the same gracious results at this one, but was sadly disappointed.

As soon as the Conference was over he left for the Philadelphia Conference. It sat five days and a half, and the bishop then started on his journey to New York. For years the faithful animal who bore him was a mare whom he called "Little Jane," and

Digitized by Microsoft®

to whom he was tenderly attached. On this journey he says: "Here my little Jane was horned by a cow and was lamed. She is done, perhaps, forever for me, but it may be all for the best. I am unwell, the weather is bad, but except my feelings for the poor beast I am peaceful and resigned. I was able to write but not to preach on the Sabbath." Poor little Jane! How many weary miles had she borne the faithful apostle, and how tender was his love for her! We cannot but hope that the ignominious wound was not fatal; that Jane had greener pastures and an easier life than she had had in days gone by.

Procuring another Jane, he went on his way to New York and into New England. The constant travel on horseback and the very hot weather of June were trying to him, but not so much so as the trials of his office. He was very sensitive, and felt keenly the misjudgments and censures of some of those with whom he had to do. He could not give satisfaction to many, and they poured upon his head their vials of wrath. "O man! thou hidest thy face and changest thy voice," he says, "and I must be troubled forsooth. But I am just as serene as ever as to what man can say or do. Whom shall I trust? Why, who but a good and true and never-failing God." His journey through New England was by much the same route; through Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and over the rough hills of New Hampshire and Vermont back into New York. It was a very fatiguing journey, and he says, "I suffered from hunger and was skinned several times." He had spent fifteen dollars in traveling from the 20th of June to the 27th of July. This was to him a very heavy outlay, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

seemed extravagant. He rarely had a bill to pay in the south, and but few in the west, and this outlay for food for man and beast seemed to him to be very extraordinary. He came on rapidly through Pennsylvania and upper Delaware, and by September was in the west of Pennsylvania, riding over the steep hills of Wayne county; but it was not in the power of his feeble frame to bear up under all, and he was forced to yield. For thirty days he was in a sick room. In the kind family of Harry Stevens he was attended by two doctors, who at last happily left him to himself. They were seldom right in their treatment, he said, and medicines were not to be had. He was not able to travel, but travel he must, and he began his farther journey to the west. Riding brought on a fever and cough. Whatcoat, feeble too, was with him, and the self-sacrificing Asbury gave him his easier riding horse and took Whatcoat's jolting steed. They could not hope to reach the Kentucky Conference, and barely hoped to get to the South Carolina in time. Whatcoat persisted in going into the west, and Asbury wrote Daniel Hitt, who was on a district in Ohio:

PHELPS'S, November 7, 1804.

My Dear Daniel: You will be surprised to hear of my passing this way. I have been sick upon Monongahela and Ohio about sixty days. I must needs preach at Union and Jacob Murphey's; ride twelve miles through the hot sun, and some rain. This brought on a chill and burning fever every day, with a most inveterate cough. I used emetics, two; the second cleared me. I was bled four times, and blistered four. I was part of my time at Harry Stevens's, and two weeks at Beck's. I had no intermission, but only a remission, for fifty days. I gave up my visit to the eastern. Brother What-

Digitized by Microsoft®

coat came up with me, and stayed till two days of my recovery. I came off as soon as the Indian summer came on. I came from Beck's (from Sabbath to Sabbath) to Cresap's. I am now on my way to Charleston. I must make the best of good weather. I have written to appoint a president; I believe it will come to that in time. I am in no doubt or fear but the connection will do as well or better without me as with me. The president elders have more local knowledge; they have more personal information of the preachers and circuits. I only go because it is my appointment from the Conference, and to cast in my mite; and I cannot be idle.

I am happy to find the work of God is reviving to the westward. I shall be pleased to have a narrative of the work in this district. God certainly has a controversy with this land. Many that will not be mended will be ended, or mended and ended both. America is the infant of Divine Providence. He must begin to correct—he will correct us himself; he will not let others do it. I make no doubt there is not a single spot but will feel in time (and turn) the rod of God. The sinners in the cities are not sinners above all the Galileans. I anticipated the pleasure of seeing you: but time is short: I must improve every hour of fair weather and sun.

I am, as ever, thine, F. Asbury.

He received constant kindness from everybody, for, go whither he would, he was never among strangers. He was now, perhaps, the best known and the most beloved man in America. While he was at Cokesbury he had to punish a refractory student. Thirty years had gone, and as he passed near him he called to see him. He says: "We rode to James Cresap's. Notwithstanding what passed at Cokesbury, he received me as a father. That matter might have been better managed. We were to have all the boys to become angels. John Hesselius sent me a note of invitation to see him. I did so. He reminded me of his respectable father who took me to

Digitized by Microsoft®

his house thirty years ago, in the time I was exposed to daily reproach and contempt."

The bishop made the journey by the most direct route to Charleston, and without incident reached there better, despite his fatigue and exposure, than when he started from Pennsylvania, the 10th of October. When one takes into consideration the character of the roads, and the feebleness of the man, and the greatness of the distance, he is amazed at the fact that the journey was made.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXII.

1805.

Journey Northward—Letter to Hitt—Conference in North Carolina—Episcopal Trials—Journey to the North—Journey to the West and the South.

THE Conference at Charleston, which was the beginning of the series, met January 1, 1805. The bishop was feeble, but was able to preach, and after resting a week and preparing the minutes for publication, he began his tour. In a month's time he was to meet with the Virginia brethren at Taylor's, in Granville county, North Carolina. He and his companions nearly always chose a different route for each return northward, and he now made his way through the high waters and over the wretched causeways through eastern South Carolina and into eastern North Carolina. The ferries were numerous and the boats were very poor. Sometimes the travelers had to swim their horses, and in doing so wet their own limbs; sometimes they crossed in a canoe with their horses swimming beside them. The ferryboats were shackling, and more than once they were in great danger. Poor, aged, feeble Whatcoat suffered much, and the chronic trouble which tormented him was fearfully aggravated by this exposure. Asbury himself was bleeding at the lungs, but, despite all this, he kept in motion and kept the work going. Wherever there was a place which needed a preacher, and a preacher could be had, Asbury or-

Digitized by Microsoft®

dered him there. The battle was at its height. Revivals were everywhere, and never had such success attended the evangelical labors of the itinerants. At that time the pastoral relation, as it at present exists, was hardly known. Every preacher was an evangelist, and every nerve was strained to keep up with the demand for aggressive work. The leading spirit who directed all these movements, the general commanding this army, was this feeble old man of sixty years, breaking down with fatigue, but still clear-headed and untiring. When he reached Fayetteville, North Carolina, where the Presbyterians were strong and the Methodists weak, Dr. Flinn, the Presbyterian minister, politely asked the good bishop to take his pulpit, which he as politely declined. He was offered the statehouse, but refused it. Henry Evans, a most remarkable negro, had built a plain, homely church, which was known as the African meetinghouse, and in it Asbury preached. While in the low lands near Wilmington he was riding through a rice plantation when he came to an unbridged canal. The negro overseer came and made a way for them to cross, and Asbury found, to his delight, that he was one of the Methodist sheep. The housekeeper gladly received the bishop into the hospitable home of the absent planter. The poor people, black and white, who formed the Wilmington congregation had built, Asbury said, an elegant meetinghouse, sixty-six by thirty-six feet in dimension. At New Berne he wrote to Daniel Hitt:

NEW BERNE, N. C., Jan. 26th, 1805.

My Dear Daniel: May the spirit of holy Daniel and a holy God fill thy soul! I received thy two letters at too late a period to be answered from Charleston. I found it proper

Digitized by Microsoft®

to move as soon as Conference expired. God is good to me. I found, as I proceeded southward, my health increased. To my joy, I found brother Whatcoat had returned from the western states in good health—all things in good order, almost everything done my letter anticipated; but my letter not received till after the Conference; increase of eighteen preachers in the Kentucky Conference; two thousand members: South Conference, eleven preachers, few located; increase of members, fifteen hundred, notwithstanding the deaths and great removals to the west, whose membership must be suspended for a time. We had great love and union, but little money. I believe the Conference in the south was near one thousand dollars insolvent. Our married men sweep us off in the circuits, and share a great part of the bounty of two hundred and sixty dollars, Charter, and Book Concern. Yet such is the consequence of the work: we employ all we judge worthy. I calculate upon twenty thousand added to the societies, and twenty thousand dollars insolvency. We must not have gold and grace. God will give us souls for wages. We overseers find this the very nick of time, in the winter season, to visit the seaports: these give us an opportunity of preaching to hundreds of the inhabitants of the sea. Our town stands are of great magnitude: by being present, I feel their importance, especially when we can get the Jews and Gentiles to work it right. I find it matter of very great heartfelt concern to settle the frontiers of the sea, as well as the frontiers of the east, west, and north. We have the following towns which call for stationed preachers: Augusta, Columbia, Camden, Georgetown—yes, oh that I could command Savannah also! In the North State, Fayetteville, Raleigh, Wilmington, New Berne, Washington, Edenton, poor Halifax, then Portsmouth, Norfolk, Petersburg, Richmond, and some others; for when we can come at a square of two miles, and two thousand souls, it is an object that we shall not perhaps find in a circuit; besides comers and goers, as we generally say. We gain in this town, upon Trent, a dark place. A poor old local preacher labored and preached till he was called home: now God has visited his children and neighbors; one hundred souls have been brought in. The work grows in Georgia and the Car-

Digitized by Microsoft®

olinas. I can see a surprising difference everywhere since the year 1785. Oh, what prospects open in 1805! I am lengthy; I am loving; you are liberal in writing to me. You have my letter that was lost by this time. I have a letter from Joshua Taylor informing me of the success of our Conference in the Maine—of a camp meeting and several happy seasons in the Maine. Glory! I thank you for the printed account. I have a written one from Billy Thacher.

The famous Abner Wood is turned Baptist from stem to stern. He was going on till they suspended him preaching Baptist-like upon the New London Circuit: now our Discipline is a human invention: Jocelin is rebaptized. See our great Conference men. We must have some drawbacks.

They judged the camp meeting near Suffolk was the greatest ever known. Four hundred professed in four days. Baltimore and the Point look up. The fire of God is broken out in the city of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia): near one hundred souls converted. God's thoughts are not as ours, nor his ways as our ways. I received a long letter from brother Willis. I have only to add, he and myself have served the Church, the one above forty years, local and traveling, the other between twenty and thirty. We must leave the government to younger men now. You know my thoughts on the local eldership; they are yours. As to any valuable ends he contemplates, I can see none in his letter that might not be answered, as to their usefulness; but a judicious presiding elder might secure. The South Conference wrote a letter to the trustees of the Charter Fund, applauding gratitude for their attention. By brother Cooper a letter is sent that they are well under way in York, and much work on hand. At least I am happily disappointed, he is gone to York to stay. I am always pleased to be disappointed for the best. B. Jones, Gibson, N. Watters, and W. Lee, all I have heard of the deaths. Now, brother, perfect love; live it, preach it. I have marked the kindling of a fire in the Latin and Greek Churches, so called, the French and Russians, the British at the bottom. I saw it some time, but it is likely to break out: it will probably involve the whole world. What can we say? Let us make haste to promote the work of God. It shall be well with the righteous. I am thine, F. ASBURY.

Digitized by Microsoft®

From New Berne he went on his northern journey, in company with poor Whatcoat, who was suffering agony at times with that physical ill that at last took him off. There had been a great deal of rain and there were heavy floods, but they managed to reach Norfolk and Portsmouth; and then, through the counties in which Methodism had won her first triumphs, and where Asbury and Whatcoat had both traveled for many years, they made their way to Granville county, North Carolina.

While that class of Americans, known in these days as gentry, had little to do as a common thing with the Methodists, there were in every state representatives of the leading families among her adherents, and Edmond Taylor was one of the best of these people. He lived in Granville, and around him were other Methodist families of the same character, and no doubt at his instance the Virginia Conference held its session at his home. When the Conference concluded, Asbury and Whatcoat began their journey to Winchester, Virginia, where the Baltimore Conference was to meet. The weather was severe, the roads were bad, and the route led them directly over the Blue Ridge Mountains, but they made the journey in time, and Asbury presided over the Conference.

He had the usual trials of a Methodist bishop. Lawrence McCombs, one of his leading preachers, refused positively to take his appointment, and had to be changed; and at the Philadelphia Conference one of the five days of the session was taken up in hearing an appeal case.

As he passed through Baltimore on his way to the

Digitized by Microsoft®

cast, the bishop preached for the Light-street people, but they were dull of hearing. "He feared the people were preached to death." As he did every year, he visited Perry Hall. "It had been repainted and newly furnished, and the grandchildren were gay and playful, but he and his host felt that the evening had come to them." Two years after he followed his friend of thirty years to the grave. The Philadelphia Conference met at Chestertown, and he presided over it, and came on to Philadelphia. His lifelong friend, Dr. McGaw, one of the few evangelicals among the Episcopal clergy, was dying. His mind was affected, but his heart was full of joy, and Asbury prayed at his bedside. So perfectly dead was Asbury to the world that he was sometimes unduly depressed because others did not regard his somewhat arbitrary dictates. One of these was that there should be vocal prayer after each meal in every Methodist home; and he feared, he said, such was his poor success, after eighteen years of faithful labor, that some Methodists did not do so. "God be gracious to us and to such families and unfaithful souls!"

The New York Conference met at Ashgrove, New York, where Embury died, and after its close the bishop went into New England. They went the usual round, and Asbury made his usual comments, and then, with Joseph Crawford as a companion, he started to the west. A jersey wagon was purchased in Philadelphia, and by the usual difficult route he went to Ohio. Ohio was being rapidly peopled, and great numbers were crowding the highways. He had but entered the state when his traveling com-

Digitized by Microsoft®

panion was taken seriously ill. Governor Tiffin was a local preacher and physician, as well as governor of the state, and ministered to the sick preacher, who was soon able to go on his journey. Philip Gatch, his old associate and his stern antagonist in the sacramental controversy, had now removed to Ohio, and was a leading man in the state. He was still a devoted Methodist and doing much to build up the Church, and the two old companions met in these wilds. Many of his old Maryland friends had removed to Ohio, many of his Virginia friends to Kentucky, and he found himself now in the homes of those whose grandfathers he had received into the societies in the east. The journey through Ohio was made with difficulty, but it was at last made, and he reached the Conference at Mount Gerizim, in Kentucky. He had not been able to meet these frontier preachers the year before, but in the hands of the matchless McKendree the work had not suffered. The heroic band of twenty-five received their appointments, and then by a new, but by no means an improved, route they came southward. There was but little that was unusual in their journey to South Carolina and into Georgia, and despite this constant journeying, Asbury found time to read Judge Marshall's Life of Washington, which he greatly enjoyed. When he reached Charleston, many colored people came to see him, and he had prayer with all who came. The Conference was to meet at Camden, and on the 30th of December the two bishops came into Camden. Asbury had met every appointment and had traveled the entire circuit, going from the frontiers of Georgia to the borders of Maine, and

Digitized by Microsoft®

from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. He had been wonderfully strong and cheerful. For some time his spiritual conflicts and his conflicts with depression seem to have ceased. Doubting Castle had been left far behind. There was no question now that he was filled with pure love, and his soul was flooded with constant peace.

The work had been so wonderful and was going forward with such great rapidity that his heart was cheered with the good news of victory. The preachers were true and heroic, the people responsive, and he was now strangely well, and while all the burden of the bishopric rested on him he had been able to bear up under it; but it was evidently impossible that this heavy labor could be long continued, and it became evident to him, as to others, that the episcopacy must be strengthened. Dr. Coke was nominally a bishop, but his relationship was merely nominal. Whatcoat was an invalid, and on the shoulders of Asbury rested the whole burden. He felt the weight, but bravely bent himself to the work before him.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1806.

Asbury Alone—Coke Offers to Come to America—Offer Declined—Camp Meetings in the East—Whatcoat's Death—Western Tour—Southern Tour.

THE Conferences of the year 1806 began with South Carolina, which the bishop called the South Conference. The condition of things was anomalous. There were apparently three bishops—Coke, Asbury, and Whatcoat—and there was in fact but one. Whatcoat was superannuated, Coke was in England, and on Asbury alone all the labor except that of travel rested. Coke had married a rich wife of deep piety, and was willing now to return to America to stay all the time. At least he thought he was, but the fact was he could not have remained in any one place long. He would not have been content had he come to America, but he wrote to the preachers that he was willing under certain conditions to come and remain.

As there was no General Conference in session, this letter was presented to the Annual Conferences for their consideration. Asbury said of the way in which it was received at Baltimore: "An answer was given to Dr. Coke's letter, I fear in a manner that will not please him. An order was passed that the answer should be presented to all the Annual Conferences. It was also recommended to the Annual Conferences to consider on the propriety of having

Digitized by Microsoft®

a select delegated Conference. The eastern, western, and southern Conferences were counseled to take such measures as they in their wisdom might see best, to produce a more equal representation from their several bodies to the General Conference." The Conference did not recall Dr. Coke then, and never did; and while his name remained on the minutes they recited the fact that he was permitted to remain in England. It will be remembered, however, that this was done by the preachers as a body, and not by a delegated General Conference. The effort of Asbury to have a delegated General Conference provided for at this time was defeated, as well as his plan to have a select number who should elect another bishop before the regular General Conference of 1808.

After the Baltimore Conference, Asbury left for the Philadelphia Conference, which met in Philadelphia. He made his usual detour through the eastern shore country, separated from Whatcoat, but met him again in Delaware, and took him in his carriage. On the journey the saintly old man was taken with a severe illness, and Asbury was forced to leave him. The attack ended fatally; Whatcoat died near Dover.

The Conference at Philadelphia answered Dr. Coke's letter in much the way in which it had been answered from Baltimore, and so did the Conference in New York. This no doubt was very much to Asbury's mind. He had little disposition to surrender the entire control of any part of the work, which had cost him so much, into the hands of anyone; and while he loved Dr. Coke very tenderly, he knew him

Digitized by Microsoft®

too well to be willing voluntarily to step aside, and yield place to one in whose judgment he had so little confidence. He went from New York to the New England Conference. These New England preachers had two defects, in his eye; they would get married, and they would stay in town. He says the Conference sat seven hours a day. The address concerning a new bishop was concurred in, but he adds: "We did not, to my grief, tell our experiences, nor make observations as to what we had known of the work of God; the members were impatient to be gone, particularly the married town-men." "Why did I not visit this country sooner?" he says again. "Ah! what is the toil of beating over rocks, hills, mountains, and deserts five thousand miles a year? Nothing, when we reflect it is done for God, for Christ, for the Holy Spirit, the Church of God, the souls of poor sinners, the preachers of the gospel in the seven Conferences, one hundred and thirty thousand members, and one or two millions who congregate with us in the solemn worship of God. Oh, it is nothing."

In order to attend the Conferences the preachers, we learn from his journal, were absent from their work for two or three months. This is only to be accounted for by considering the vast distances the preachers had to travel on horseback, and even then the time taken in the journey seems excessive.

Camp meetings had now made their way from Kentucky to this far east. It is impossible properly to estimate the ultimate effect of this accidental assemblage in the barrens of Kentucky, and Asbury's journals are full of allusions to the great work

Digitized by Microsoft®

wrought at them. He made it his special aim to reach as many of them as he possibly could, and he visited a number on this tour. As he feared, Whatcoat was dead, and he pays this beautiful tribute to the good man's memory: "My faithful friend for forty years, who ever heard him speak an idle word? when was guile found in his mouth? A man so uniformly good, I have not known in Europe or America." He turned now to the west. The route he took this time was up the Valley of Virginia, through Salem and Wytheville, to the widow Russell's, at Saltville, where he found the dear old saint as happy and cheerful as ever. The route he took to the Holston Conference, which met at Ebenezer, on the Nolachucky, was a rough one, and he was not well; but he reached the place where the Conference was to be held in good time.

The work of these noble pioneers was still the hardest on the continent. He found the poor preachers ragged, so he parted with his watch, his coat and shirt. There were not far from two thousand people present on Sunday, and he says: "If good were done, which I trust and hope, it is some compensation for my sufferings. Thirteen hundred miles in heat and sickness on the road, and in the house restless hours, the noise of barking dogs, impatient children and people trotting about, and opening and shutting doors at all hours."

He was lost on his way through the mountains of North Carolina, and had to spend a night in an old schoolhouse. He had no fire, and no bed save a bare bench. Moses Lawrence, who traveled with him, had a bear skin on the floor.

Digitized by Microsoft®

In descending the mountains into Rutherford county, North Carolina, "one of the descents," he says, "is like the roof of a house for nearly a mile. I rode, I walked, I sweat, I trembled; my old knees failed. Here are gullies and rocks and precipices." He attended a camp meeting in Rutherford, then passed on through Lincoln to South Carolina, and rested a week at his old home at Rembert Hall. He had long since ceased to antagonize slaveholding, as much as he disliked it, and realizing the fact that it might be an evil for which the proposed remedy of immediate emancipation was no cure, he contented himself with preaching the gospel to master and slave. The idea that Dr. Coke had so pressed—the sinfulness of slaveholding under all circumstances—he never entertained; and as he grew older, and realized more and more the difficulties in the way of emancipation, he was still less disposed to speak positively as to what should be done. Gough, Rembert, Grant, Tait, and many others of his most valued friends, were large slave owners. In their homes he rested, and in their piety he had perfect confidence, but he never became reconciled to slavery, and had it been in his power he would have ended it speedily.

On Sunday, November 4, he was in Charleston once more. Here he remained over a week, and then when to Augusta. The good old bishop was a little worried with one of the young preachers. He was not exactly pleased when any one differed with him, but when that one was a young man he had to be looked after. He says: "Hugh Porter had written to this town about a station; and added to the mischief he had formerly done. And behold, here is a

Digitized by Microsoft®

bell over the gallery! and cracked too; may it break. It is the first I ever saw in a house of ours in America. I hope it will be the last."

He made his usual tour through Georgia, calling on his old friends Thomas Grant and Ralph Banks, and thence to Judge Charles Tait's. He "did not present himself," he said, "in the character of a gentleman, but as a Christian, and a Christian minister. I won't visit the President of the United States in any other character. As to Presbyterian ministers, and all ministers of the gospel, I will treat them with great respect, and ask no favors of them. To humble ourselves before those who think themselves so much above the Methodist preachers by worldly honors, by learning, and especially by salary, will do them no good." The man who was the welcome guest of Ridgley, Van Cortlandt, Bassett, Livingston, and Gough, and the friend of Otterbein and Jarratt, need scarcely to have feared the charge of toadyism because he visited a Georgia judge, and treated respectfully Messrs. Cummings and Doak; but he was a little sensitive to the lowly estimate in which his people were held, as he thought, by the Presbyterians. His letters told him that the camp meetings in Maryland and Delaware were having amazing results. Five hundred and twenty-eight persons converted at one in Maryland and hundreds in Delaware. "But what a rumpus was raised! Grand juries in Virginia and Delaware have prosecuted the noisy preachers. Lawyers and doctors are in arms. The lives, blood, and livers of the poor Methodists are threatened. Poor, crazy sinners, see ye not that the Lord is with us?"

Digitized by Microsoft®

The Conference in Georgia met in the village of Sparta, and Asbury's favorite scheme of a called General Conference went through without serious objection, only two opposing.

The close of this year found him in the heart of Georgia. He seems to have been in firmer health than at any other period of his life in America. He was the sole bishop, and at no time has the episcopacy of the American Church had so precarious a tenure. Coke was in Europe, Whatcoat was dead, and there was no General Conference for a year ahead. Upon his life depended more perhaps than he himself knew. He was, however, sufficient for the work demanded, and as soon as the Conference closed he made ready for his northward flitting.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1807.

Asbury Alone—Journey Northward—Western New York—Visits Ohio, and Goes Through Kentucky to Georgia—Views on Education.

WHATCOAT was dead, Coke was in Europe, Asbury was alone, and the first day of January, 1807, found him on the road from Augusta moving toward Rembert Hall. The weather was very cold and the exposure very great, but he made the journey in a few days, and found shelter at his old friend's house, where he took time to answer his letters. The Virginia Conference was to meet early in February, in New Berne, North Carolina, and he pressed on to meet it. He had now the whole work to visit, and he took the easiest and quickest route—his oft-traveled way along the tide-water counties of North Carolina and Virginia—to Norfolk, where he turned westward. He says little of the Virginia Conference, and makes no mention of the fact that it defeated his plans for a called Conference.

After its adjournment, through the cold March winds, by Petersburg and Fredericksburg, he pushed on to Baltimore, where he met the Conference. It began its session on Monday, and remained in session till Saturday evening. As soon as it was over he visited his friends at Perry Hall, and then made his usual visitation to the eastern shore, going as far down as Accomac, and thence through Delaware to

Digitized by Microsoft®

Philadelphia, where he held the Philadelphia Conference.

The New York Conference met at Coeyman's Patent, near Albany, beginning on Saturday and closing in seven days, and then Asbury crossed into Vermont. He entered the state in Rutland county and struck the Green Mountains, and, though it was the 14th of May, snow was in the mountains still, and the roads across the mountains were fearful. "We were obliged," he says, "to lead the horses as they dragged the carriage up the heights, over rocks, logs, and caving in of the earth; when we arrived at the Narrows we found that the bank had given way and slidden down. I proposed to work the carriage along the road by hand while Daniel Hitt led the horses. He preferred my leading them, so on we went; but I was weak and not attentive enough, perhaps, and the mare ran me on a rock. Up went the wheel hanging balanced over a precipice forty feet, rocks, trees, and the river beneath us. I felt lame by the mare's treading on my foot; we unhitched the beast, and righted the carriage after unloading the baggage, and so we got over the danger and the difficulty; but never in my life have I been in such apparent danger."

It was his custom, whenever he stopped, to have prayer, whether in taverns or private houses, among saints or sinners, friends or strangers, and to speak to everyone about his soul. The travelers went across Vermont to New Hampshire, into the District of Maine, through Berwick, Kennebeck, Saco, and Scarboro to Portland, and then back into New Hampshire. On June 1 he was in Boston, where the

Digitized by Microsoft®

Conference was to assemble. The Conference held an agreeable session, and he started west.

He entered New York on the 15th of June, "faint, sick, and lame." The old rheumatic trouble in his feet had so lamed him that he had to walk on crutches, but despite his lameness he now decided on a visit to the newly-settled country in the western part of New York, among the lakes. Methodism had made quite a conquest there, and was growing rapidly. The camp meeting had been introduced, and had come to stay for a long time, and to have great influence on its future. The country was wild, and there was trouble with drunken men on the camp grounds, which he notes.

He now came through the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, following along the course of the Susquehanna. On his way south he passed through Nazareth and Bethlehem, where nearly a century before the Moravians had made their settlement. He was as little pleased with the Moravians as he had been with the Congregationalists. He could not but note, however, their good arrangement, their elegant buildings, and their delightful surroundings, and he was of the opinion that Bethlehem and Nazareth were good places for the men of the world who did not want their children spoiled by religion. "They could send them here with safety."

Across the Lehigh road, on down through Lancaster, he came to York, where for some days he remained, writing up his correspondence and preparing for his western tour. He had ridden twenty-five hundred miles since he left Baltimore.

He had rheumatism in both feet, and now his old

Digitized by Microsoft®

throat trouble returned; but he did not pause on his journey to Ohio, where the first Conference ever held in the state was to convene at Chillicothe, on the 14th of September. He reached the seat of the Conference while there was a camp meeting, and presided. He had made this long, hard journey in his jersey wagon, but as he now wished to visit the frontier settlements on the Miami, he sold his wagon and resolved to make the visitation on horseback. He was in poor health for such an attempt, but he never allowed anything to thwart him in what he thought was his duty; so he pushed forward, visited his old friends in Ohio, and crossed the river into Kentucky. There was little of note in the weary journey which he made through Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia.

He was very happy in his experience, and preached as often as he could, pressing upon the people everywhere the necessity for, and the possibility of, perfect love. He says of Georgia: "Oh, what a necessity to urge the doctrine of sanctification! a doctrine almost forgotten here." He entered South Carolina and visited Rembert Hall, and on January 1 opened the South Carolina Conference in Charleston. He had made the circuit of the continent again.

This is a somewhat brief and uninteresting story of a tour which cost him great labor, and which he made in great pain, and it is substantially the story so often told in his life. There was generally something new in his travels, for nearly every year he visited some new field; but the necessity for reaching certain places at certain times led him often over the same routes of travel, and at that time the pathways across the mountains were so few that each year

Digitized by Microsoft®

he traveled the same road, and his journal, upon which one must depend largely for authentic accounts, is rather a dry detail of similar accounts very hastily made, and often very unsatisfactory. He gives nothing but a very short statement of the places he reached and how he reached them, and says little at any time of those who were with him, and of the incidents of travel. We could, with the assistance of other books, fill in the vacant places by historic details; but a life of Asbury thus written would be a history of early Methodism, and not a simple biography of the primitive bishop.

The work which he had so largely laid out was wonderfully successful. He was a man of remarkable common sense. He knew what ought to be done, and generally who was the best man to do it. He never hesitated to do any work himself, and allowed no hardships to discourage him, and no danger to daunt him. He had explored the whole territory, he knew the conditions, and his plans were always wisely conceived. The corps of assistant bishops whom he had chosen were men admirably selected; and when he was unable to direct the campaign personally, he had a lieutenant on whom he could fully rely. It has been charged against him that he was not concerned enough about schools, colleges, an educated ministry, and a comfortable maintenance of these in the work. This may have been to some extent true, but the immense issues at stake, the demand for the most earnest evangelistic work, in his mind, outranked everything else. The camp meeting had come. He saw the opportunity. The field preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield,

Digitized by Microsoft®

which made Methodism in England and Ireland, was now fairly begun in America, and by a strange providence begun in the ranks of another denomination. The experiment born of necessity had resulted in an institution. There was a class of camp-meeting preachers who were admirably fitted to conduct these meetings, and they were used in every section. The excitements and the extravagances which were in these meetings were not offensive to him. The deadness, the formality, the lifeless prayer meeting were far more obnoxious to him than the noise and confusion of the battlefield. As he went on his way, he received tidings by every mail of the glorious victories that were being won in these fields.

He was a bright, happy old man—older, in fact, than his years. He saw the fruits of his untiring toil on every side, and while he realized the slender thread on which the superintendency hung, and the serious nature of the situation, he did not allow it to distress him. He had done all he could to have matters bettered, and had failed; and now he patiently went on, not knowing whence relief would come.

One thing was plain, the American preachers were not willing to be ruled by Dr. Coke as they had been by Asbury, and were not willing to have any man in Asbury's place whom they had not chosen and upon whom they could not rely. Who that one was, perhaps none knew. The General Conference was to convene in May, 1808, and there were certain changes that would be made then; and at last, after twenty-four years of trying labor, there was a prospect of some relief to the weary old bishop. That relief came when McKendree was chosen.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXV.

1808.

South Carolina Conference—George Dougherty—Northward Journey Through New Virginia - Baltimore—General Conference—Death of Harry Gough—Conference Legislation—Election of McKendree—Tour of the Bishops—Meets William Capers—Capers's Recollections.

THE beginning of 1808 found the South Carolina Conference in session in Camden, only twenty miles away from Rembert Hall. In the twenty years during which this Conference had been in existence it had grown wonderfully, and had already produced some of those remarkable men of whom it has had so many. One of the most wonderful men it ever had produced had now passed away, and Asbury paid a tribute to him in his sermon. This was George Dougherty, an Irishman by descent. He had worked with great success in South Carolina and Georgia. He was a man of unusual cultivation for those days, a fine Greek and Hebrew scholar, who had studied the advanced books on mental and moral science, and was a fearless and eloquent preacher. To him the Church owes the important law limiting the pastoral term. Up to the time that he suggested the law to limit it to two years, the bishops had been at their own will as to how long a preacher should remain in a charge. He had been the means of establishing a rule in the South Carolina Conference by which if a preacher left his circuit in times of

Digitized by Microsoft®

pestilence he should travel no more amongst us. His courage in rebuking sin in Charleston had so angered the mob that they had dragged him to the town pump, and would have murdered him but for the intrepidity of a good woman, who stuffed her apron in the mouth of the pump. He had died a comparatively young man, and now Asbury preached his funeral sermon.

This South Conference, as Asbury called it, had a supply of preachers brought up within it. He was no longer compelled to go to Virginia for his preachers, but promising boys, as he called them, were coming forward to take the charges, much to his gratification. James Russell, Lovick Pierce, Reddick Pierce, William Arnold, W. M. Kennedy, John Collinsworth, Samuel Dunwody, men who were to act the yeomen's part in the future, were now receiving appointments from his hand. He still was as indifferent to any rules of order as he had been when the Conferences were composed of less than a dozen men, but his will was regarded as law by those who were under his charge. He gave all his thought to arranging the work and advancing it. He kept every part of it under his eye, and was on the watch continually for some devoted man to go to a new field. Everything in these frontier Conferences was formative, but he saw to it that no large section of the country was left unsupplied. The Conferences were not then business meetings, and every day at noon at this Conference there was preaching. As soon as the Conference was over he returned to Rembert's, and after a week's rest he began his journey northward.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Through the forest, over bad roads, on a lame horse, cold, hungry, he journeyed. This, he says, was one side; but then he had prayer, patience, peace, and love, and he says he had the odds greatly in his favor. He was sixty-three years old, and all the burden of superintendency rested on his shoulders, but he preached as regularly as the humblest circuit preacher in the connection; and riding his lame mare and preaching every day, he says his soul was very happy in the Lord. He passed through the western part of North Carolina, skirting the foothills, and thence into Henry county—New Virginia, as it was called. This was a comparatively new country, and quite a rugged one. The frequent changes of weather and the wretched road made traveling disagreeable, but it was much worse in the cabins, crowded with men, women, and children; no place to retire for reading, writing, or meditation, and the woods too cold for solitude. "We are weather-bound. I employ my time in writing, reading, praying, and planning." He was moving toward Lynchburg, which he reached in good time, and on Sunday preached to about six hundred hearers, when he was paid for all his toil. The Conference session began on Tuesday. The Virginia Conference was a very large, strong Conference, extending from New Berne, North Carolina, to the Peaks of Otter. It had a strong corps of preachers, and they were led by Jesse Lee. They had more than once thwarted Asbury in his aims, and had not only defeated his plan for a council, but his plan for a called General Conference which should be a delegated body; but now the Conference consented to do what he wished—to accept

Digitized by Microsoft®

the New York proposition for a delegated General Conference.

Leaving Lynchburg, and traveling along through the Virginia midland counties, he made his way to Loudoun, where at the widow Roszel's he made a short stay. He preached at Leesburg, and arrived in Alexandria on the Sunday before the Conference began. The Conference convened in session for a week, and after traveling without fire, food, or water, on Wednesday afternoon he reached the city. He was not able to tarry long anywhere. He was anxious to complete his round, so that the Conferences should act before the General Conference in May, and he hurried northward, where he held the Philadelphia, then the New York, and then the New England Conference; and after having made his round, he reached Perry Hall again on May 2.

It was a sad coming. His dearest friend, after Judge White and James Rembert, Harry Gough, was dying. We have often had occasion to refer to him. He was perhaps the wealthiest Methodist in America. He belonged to the English nobility, and had inherited a large estate from England, married into the Ridgley family, and had begun life a rollicking gentleman of those wild days. His wife, as we have seen, had been converted through Asbury's influence; he had been converted also, and was for a time very zealous. Then there was a time of backsliding and an alienation from Asbury, but his spiritual father had been the means of his recovery again, and for many years his country seat, Perry Hall, had been Asbury's home. It was an elegant old colonial mansion with a chapel in which his many slaves assem-

Digitized by Microsoft®

bled for family worship, and where the circuit preachers had service. Gough had been very dear to Asbury and a true friend to the Church, and the General Conference paid him no higher honours than he deserved when many of the members walked in procession to his grave. Asbury had long hoped for a General Conference such as would give the west and far south a fair place in the councils of the Church, and the delegated Conference, he hoped, would do that. In the histories of Methodism there is a full account of this Conference. With it Asbury individually had little to do. The idea which Asbury had of discipline led him to interfere whenever he thought there was any danger of weakening authority. His favorite expression was that men who did not know how to obey would not know how to rule, but during this Conference he seems to have taken even a less part than in those which went before. This was the last general convention of Methodist preachers; the last General Conference of unrestricted powers. From this time forth the delegated Conference had to act in a limited sphere, and the bishops were less under its control. The Conference elected William McKendree an associate bishop. It is somewhat amusing that Bishop Asbury should refer to this election as he does in his journal. "Dear brother McKendree," he says, "was elected assistant bishop." As McKendree was not elected assistant but associate bishop, with coördinate powers, the manner in which the old man regarded it was characteristic. He had been from 1784 to 1808, for twenty-four years, unrestrained and with undivided powers, and he had little idea of

Digitized by Microsoft®

being now superseded or hampered. McKendree was in the prime of his mature manhood, strong-minded, strong-bodied, strong-willed; a man of wonderful self-poise, of the most heroic mold, and withal of the deepest piety. He had been in fact if not in law a bishop for eight years, presiding over a diocese of immense area, and one which demanded the highest qualities in its superintendent, and he had met all its demands. If Asbury could have chosen from the whole body the man he would have preferred as his associate, it is likely that McKendree would have been that man. And now for the first time in the fourth of a century Asbury felt that he could take a little rest; but he did not do so. There was a respite from imperious calls, but he spent this month going on visiting and preaching among old friends and old scenes.

When Asbury first came to Maryland in 1773, he was a guest at Dr. Warfield's, where the elaborate headdresses of the ladies distressed the strict young bachelor. The doctor was living still, and he came quite a distance to meet his old acquaintance. The good bishop speaks as if the dear old doctor was still out of the fold, for he says: "I should not regret coming so many miles if I could be the means of converting this dear man to God." He saw his old friends the Willises, went to the parts of western Maryland that he had visited years before, and with his associate, Henry Boehm, went into southwestern Pennsylvania. Some of his old friends rode sixty miles to see him. Again the Western Conference was to meet in Tennessee in October, and he had planned a long itinerary to cover the land till the

Digitized by Microsoft®

time came. He was in Wheeling August 1, but the hot days and long hills almost made him cry out. He reached Ohio, and went to a camp ground, and then to the home of General Worthington, who had married the daughter of his old friend Governor Tiffin. Mary Tiffin, the governor's wife, had been very dear to the bishop, and speaking of her loss, he says: "The world little knows how dear to me are my many friends, and how deeply I feel this loss."

He was now riding through Ohio. It was August. He was feeble and worn, the heat was great, and the flies wretchedly annoying, but his heart was gladdened by the promise of great results from the camp meetings.

There was only one district in Ohio, and the country was only now being settled. The discomforts of the journey would have been great to a well man, but to him they must have been distressing. At brother Gatchell's he saw an unfeeling man about to take away a poor widow's horse, and it so troubled him that brother Gatchell, to relieve him, paid the debt and gave the animal to the widow for her lifetime.

During this trip he went into Indiana, where there were already twenty thousand people, and crossing the Ohio was again in Kentucky, and then made his way through Kentucky—passing from its extreme northern county through the entire state into Tennessee. On his way he met Benedict Swope, his old German friend of thirty years before. McKendree and Thompson came miles to meet him, and together they made the journey to the camp meeting at which the Western Conference was held. It was the first

Digitized by Microsoft®

Conference McKendree had attended since he was made bishop. Asbury, following his old habit, says: "I began Conference, and preached twice on Sabbath day and again on Tuesday." As soon as this Conference, which was largely cared for by his old friend Green Hill, had concluded its session he started for the South Carolina Conference, which was to meet in the heart of middle Georgia, December 26. The Conference which ended its session was held in Williamson county, Tennessee, a little south of Nashville. There was no direct route to Georgia, and the two bishops, with their companions, started into the wilderness. They had to journey over the mountains almost all the way. They crossed the Cumberland range and then the Alleghanies. Asbury was on a stumbling horse that would not only stumble but run away. They had rain and high rivers, he had several severe ailments, the houses were crowded, the roads were rough, and the men were bad, but despite it all, he says, he kept on his way. They crossed the mountains into North Carolina, and then along the foothills in South Carolina, and then to Camden, where he lodged with the good old Sammy Matthews.

They had a camp meeting at Rembert's, late as the season was. The weather was cold, and the superintendents had a hut with a chimney to it. At this camp meeting Asbury met his old friend Major William Capers and his gifted son, whose after history is so well known. Major Capers was converted years before under the ministry of Henry Willis, and under the influence of William Hammett had been alienated from Asbury, and gradually backslid. He had

Digitized by Microsoft®

now been reclaimed, and his young son William, a law student, had been converted. They were at camp meeting at Rembert's, and met for the first time in eighteen years. Asbury had not seen William since he was an infant. He took him tenderly in his arms, as he did his aged father. A year after this, when the young lawyer had become a circuit preacher, as Asbury and Boehm passed through the young man's circuit, the incident occurred which, told in the inimitable way of Bishop Capers, casts such a mellow light on the lovely character of the old bishop. Bishop Capers says:

I met him when a heavy snow had just fallen, and the northwest wind blowing hard made it extremely cold. The snow had not been expected, and our host was out of wood, so that what we had to use had been picked up from under the snow and was damp and incombustible. Our bedroom was a loft with a fireplace to it and a plenty of wood, but how to make the wood burn was the question. I had been at work blowing and blowing long before bedtime till to my mortification the aged bishop came up, and there was still no fire to warm him. "O, Billy Sugar," said he as he approached the fireplace, "never mind, give it up, we will get warm in bed;" and then stepping to his bed as if to ascertain the certainty of it, and lifting the bedclothes, he continued: "Yes, give it up, Sugar; blankets a plenty." So I gave it up, thinking that the play of my pretty strong lungs might disturb his devotions, for he was instantly on his knees.

But then how might I be sure of waking early enough to kindle a fire at four o'clock? My usual hour had been six, and to meet the difficulty I concluded to wrap myself in my overcoat and lie on the bed without using the bedclothes. In this predicament I was not likely to oversleep myself on so cold a night. But there might be danger of my not knowing what hour it was when I happened to wake. Nap after nap was dreamed away, as I lay shivering in the cold, till I

Digitized by Microsoft®

thought it must be four o'clock; and then, creeping to the fire and applying the breath of my live bellows as I held the watch to the reluctant coals, to see the hour, I had just made it out when the soft accents saluted me: "Go to bed, Sugar. It is hardly three o'clock yet."

Another night he says:

It was past four o'clock, and the bishop was up, but Billy Sugar lay fast asleep. So he whispered to brother Boehm not to disturb him, and the fire was made. They were dressed, had had their devotions, and were at their books before I was awake. This seemed shockingly out of order; and my confusion was complete, as, waking and springing out of bed, I saw them sitting before a blazing fire. I could scarcely say good-morning, and the bishop, as if he might have been offended at my neglect, affected not to hear it. Boehm, who knew him better, smiled pleasantly, and I whispered in his ear: "Why didn't you wake me?" The bishop seemed to hear this, and closing his book, and turning to me with a look of downright mischief, had an anecdote for me. "I was traveling," said he, "quite lately, and came to a circuit where we had one of our good boys. Oh, he was so good, and the weather was as cold as it was this night at brother Hancock's, and, as I was Bishop Asbury, he got up in the cold at three o'clock to make a fire for me. And what do you think? He slept last night till six." And he tickled at it as if he might have been a boy himself. And this was Bishop Asbury, whom I have heard called austere; a man, confessedly, who never shed tears, and who seldom laughed, but whose sympathies were nevertheless as soft as a sanctified spirit might possess.

After the camp meeting was over the travelers went on to Charleston, and from thence to the South Carolina Conference, which met at a camp ground in Green county, in Georgia. This was the first and only Annual Conference in this section held in connection with a camp meeting or near a country church. At this Conference William Capers was ad-

Digitized by Microsoft®

mitted into the traveling connection. Asbury introduced McKendree, the new bishop, to the Conference, and one by one they came forward and took him by the hand.

At the General Conference of 1800 a resolution was passed allowing an elder to travel constantly with Bishop Asbury. He had had Hull, Lee, and Whatcoat to accompany him as companions before the resolution was adopted, and after that Crawford, Snethen, and Daniel Hitt; and now he selected Henry Boehm, the son of his old friend Martin Boehm, the German pietist. Henry Boehm was now a steady young German, thirty-three years old, who had been a Methodist preacher for eight years. He was Asbury's traveling companion for six years, and assisted him greatly in his arduous work. Boehm could preach in German and English, and as there were scattered through the land a large number of native Germans who did not speak English, Boehm's services were of great value. Boehm lived to be over a hundred years old, and during his hundredth year a volume of his Reminiscences was issued. His journal runs parallel to that of Asbury, and he says little in it which Asbury does not say in his record. During the year he traveled with the bishop from the first of May. He was to meet him at Perry Hall on a certain day, but he stopped at a camp meeting and was detained a day beyond his time. When he reached Perry Hall, Asbury was gone. By hard riding he caught up with him, and accompanied him on this long tour which left them at the end of the year in the heart of middle Georgia.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1809.

McKendree's New Departure—Northward Tour—Conference at Harrisonburg—Journey to New England—Western New York—Western Conference in Cincinnati—Journey to Charleston.

SINCE Asbury had taken the control of the Methodist societies in Delaware in 1780 until now he had been the virtual dictator in the connection, at least so far as directing the work was concerned. Although Coke was legally his colleague, practically he had no more to do with the work than if his name had not been on the minutes. Whatcoat had been a legal bishop, but he had yielded the entire control to Asbury, and for all these years no will save Asbury's own had been considered in making appointments. In making laws and regulations, and in executing discipline, the Conferences had never been at all interfered with by him, but in arranging the work and appointing the men to do it he had consulted no one. He appointed presiding elders, and when he was out of the way they acted as vicar-generals, and ruled things as arbitrarily as he did, but when he was on the ground, they were not his cabinet to counsel, but his lieutenants to execute. He felt the weight upon him, and longed for relief. He had once determined to resign, but had been persuaded not to do so. The time had now come when there was some possibility of securing relief. McKendree, who had been elected in May, 1808, had

Digitized by Microsoft®

been Asbury's trusted helper in the superintendency for over ten years. He had been presiding over districts in the east which covered half a state, and in the west over a district which swept from the Alleghany Mountains to the Mississippi River. He had been in sole charge of this work for the years that Asbury was an invalid, and in all the excitement and confusion resulting from the great awakening in the west out of which came such deplorable results to other Churches, McKendree, by his strong nerve and wonderful common sense, protected the Methodist charges from greater harm. He had been unknown in the east, but when he preached his first sermon in Baltimore he was at once chosen as a bishop. He had not accepted the office expecting another to do the work, and Asbury soon found he had a colleague, and not an assistant. When McKendree took the presidency of the Conference he made some striking changes in the manner of conducting business. It had been conducted by Asbury in an informal and somewhat disorderly way. After McKendree had read his address in the General Conference of 1812, the old man rose and said, turning to McKendree: "I have something to say to you before all the brethren. You have done to-day what I never did. I want to know why." McKendree calmly said: "You are our father, and do not need these rules. I am a son, and do." "So, so!" said the old bishop with a smile, as he sat down.

It would have been greatly to the relief of Asbury's brethren, as well as to his own, if he had consented to take a season of rest, and if he had left to his younger and stronger companions the harder

Digitized by Microsoft®

part of the work at least, but this he could not do. He had been so unceasingly on the wing for nearly fifty years that rest was not relief, and although it was not really necessary for him to travel, he thought it was, and did not abate his labors at all. The beginning of the new year of 1809 found him with McKendree, in a thirty-dollar chaise, riding through middle Georgia on his way to Tarborough, North Carolina, where the Virginia Conference was to meet. He and his companion reached it in good time and presided. This Conference included a large part of North Carolina and all of Virginia east of the Blue Ridge. There was one thing about it which pleased Asbury greatly: there were but three married men in it. He thought the opposition of these high-toned southerners to the marriage of their daughters to Methodist preachers was, after all, a blessing, in that it kept the preachers single. Asbury was not opposed to the marriage of laymen, nor was he in favor of a coerced celibacy among the preachers, but he found it so much easier to use single men in the hard work demanded, and so much easier to support them, that he looked upon the marriage of the preacher as a calamity, expecting that soon after marriage there would come location.

I have already intimated that Asbury's view with reference to the immediate abolition of slavery had undergone a modification. He had ceased to write in favor of emancipation in his journal, or to urge it in the Conferences and from the pulpit. His hatred of slavery as a system had not changed, his love for the negro race was not at all diminished, but he was satisfied that immediate emancipation was neither

Digitized by Microsoft®

practicable nor judicious. He says in his journal, February, 1809: "Would not the amelioration of the condition and treatment of slaves have produced more practical good than any attempt at emancipation? The state of society unhappily does not admit this; besides, the blacks are thus deprived of the means of instruction."

The Conference ended, the bishops rode by Suffolk and Portsmouth, and on through central Virginia across the mountains into the valley, where, at Harrisonburg, the Baltimore Conference was to have its session. A large body of German pietists, Mennonites, Dunkards, and Lutherans had settled in this rich Valley of Virginia, as had quite a number of families from eastern Virginia. Among the eastern Virginians was a young physician named Harrison. He was the father of the distinguished Gessner Harrison, so famous as the Professor of Greek at the University of Virginia, and the grandfather of the distinguished authoress, Mrs. Mary Stuart Smith, wife of Professor F. H. Smith, of the University of Virginia. As soon as the Conference had concluded its session the bishop went northward, and passing through the Valley of Virginia entered Maryland by Frederick City, and on to Baltimore. He spent only a few days in the city of his early love. Although it was March, a camp meeting was held near Perry Hall, and the heart of the bishop was sad as he passed near the home of his friend Henry Gough. The Conference that met in Philadelphia, as well as that which met in New York, gave him trouble; and he said that while he was not conscious of wrong tempers, he was not willing to hold a Conference again

Digitized by Microsoft®

in Philadelphia, and that he should hold his peace about some things which occurred in New York.

He had received much kindness from the Quakers in his early days in Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware, but he felt it his duty now to rebuke them, much to their annoyance, and to say that he feared the reproach of Christ had been wiped away from them. The reader has of course seen that the good old bishop had a high standard of religious excellence, and perhaps in his opinion none but Methodists reached that, and very few of them. He went on his way to New England. He had not been very well pleased with matters on his first visit, and on each succeeding one he had seen things in no better light, and it was not very likely that as he grew older and more exacting he would find less to censure. As they came into Newport he was horrified when he saw a grand house, with a high steeple and pews, built by a lottery. But when he came to Bristol "the Methodists here had a house with pews and a preacher who had not half enough to do. Poor work! I have as much as I can bear," he said, "in body and mind. I see what has been doing for nine years past to make Presbyterian Methodists." If the piety of the New Englanders had not improved, their hospitality had, for the bishop called at but one tavern.

When he reached Lynn, and had an interview with the official brethren, they gave him a doleful account of the condition of things: "the preachers did not preach evangelically, did not visit the families, and neglected the classes." The old bishop listened respectfully enough, but said: "One story was good till another was told." The New England

Digitized by Microsoft®

Conference was to meet in Maine on the 15th of June, and at New Gloucester it was held, and then the travelers returned through New Hampshire into Vermont, and across into upper New York, and then into western New York, where they preached in barns and slept on the floor, and now and then preached in the courthouses. The Congregationalists, whom Asbury always calls Presbyterians, were laboring to preëmpt the country by building churches and establishing congregations. Asbury says somewhat complacently: "They will flourish awhile, but a despised people will possess the land. Oh, the terrors of a camp meeting to these men of pay and show!" The country was quite new, and accommodations were very poor. He says: "In the evening we mounted our horses in the rain and came six miles, dripping wet, to Asa Cummings's cabin, twelve feet square. On Tuesday morning we were well soaked before we reached David Eddy's. We had an awful time on Thursday in the woods, amongst rocks and trees, and behold the backwater had covered the causeway. One finds it hard to realize that less than a hundred years ago, in so old a state as New York, there was such a new and unsettled state of things. In upper Pennsylvania matters were worse. "Such roads, such rains, and such lodgings!" he says. "Why should I wish to stay in this land? I have no possessions or babes to bind me to the soil. What are called the comforts of life I rarely enjoy. The wish to live an hour such a life would be strange to so suffering, so toil-worn a wretch. But God is with me, and souls are my reward. I may yet rejoice; yea, I will rejoice."

Digitized by Microsoft®

The sensitive old man generally, indeed almost universally, received great kindness, but sometimes it was not his good portion. "I called at a certain house," he says. "It would not do. I was compelled to turn out again to the pelting of the wind and rain. Though old I have eyes. The hand of God will come upon them. As for the young lady, shame and contempt will fall on her. Mark the event." Asbury nearly always preached on Sunday, and rarely traveled on that day; but sometimes he did, and on this journey he says: "Sunday 23.—We must needs ride to-day; our route lay through Walnut Bottom, but we missed our way and the preaching of George Lane. A twenty-four mile ride brought us to breakfast at Otis's. Brother Boehm upset the sulky and broke the shaft. Night closed upon us at Osterout's tavern." They made their way through the mountains, and although the roads were so rough, he says he was simple enough to put plasters on his knees, and they drew huge blisters, so he neither stood to preach nor kneeled to pray. Two days afterwards he preached in the courthouse, and while he was preaching the presiding elder put his feet on the banister of his pulpit; "it was like thorns in his flesh till they were taken down." He had supplied himself with tracts in German and English, which he gave away. Cold and chilly as he was, he went to camp meeting and preached; and the two bishops made their way to Pittsburg, where the "Rev. Mr. Steel offered, unsolicited, in the name of the Presbyterian eldership, their elegant house for my Sunday exercises."

The bishops were moving toward Ohio to meet

Digitized by Microsoft®

the Western Conference, which was to meet in Cincinnati on the 30th of September; and passing through Wheeling, in which Colonel Zane had given ground for a chapel, he preached in the courthouse, and went into Ohio. He said he was weak and weary, but had great consolation in God and a witness of holiness in his soul. Why he said it then I cannot conjecture, but he adds to this: "We have our difficulties with married preachers, their wives and children, but while God is with us these difficulties must be borne." The camp meeting was now spreading all over the west. It was a very primitive affair. A grove was chosen near a stream, logs were cut down for seats, a simple stand was made for the preacher, and the people literally camped out for days. These meetings Asbury so heartily indorsed that he wished there might be twenty in a week in the various parts of the work. His old friend Governor Tiffin was now plain Dr. Tiffin, and he called to see him. While the talk of others was of politics, and of land, he had little taste for these topics. "O Lord, give me souls," he says, "and keep me holy." McKendree had gone in one direction, and he was going in another. Ohio was being peopled with marvelous rapidity, and there had been but little time for comforts to be provided. Asbury says: "I slept about five hours last night. I had excessive labor, a crowd of company and hogs, dogs, and other annoyances to weary me." At last the bishops met at Cincinnati, which Asbury calls "fair Cincinnati," where they had the Western Conference, and after its close he went into Kentucky.

The Conference was to meet in South Carolina in

Digitized by Microsoft®

two months' time, but Asbury and McKendree were in Kentucky, and there was a ride of several hundred miles to Charleston where the Conference was to meet. Eight times, he says, within nine years had he crossed these Alps, and was under the necessity of putting up at the wretched inns where there were drinking and carousing. He made the journey safely, and at last on the 10th of December was again in Charleston. Here for two weeks he remained and recruited, and the first day of 1810 found the untiring man again on the highway.

Henry Boehm, who was Asbury's traveling companion, kept a journal, from which, fifty years after Asbury's death, he published extracts, which add something to the information given by the bishop himself. The journey through the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, when Boehm was thrown from the sulky and badly hurt, though not disabled, was specially memorable. The roads were awful, and the rain poured in torrents. The mountain streams were dangerously high, and they were in a wilderness. On the banks of the Elk, where it was too high to cross, they met an eccentric Englishman who was living alone in the wilds, four miles from any other person, and in a homely cabin. He received the strangers and kept them with him for several days. Boehm said as he held the purse and knew that they had but two dollars between them, the hospitality of the hermit was for more than one reason grateful to them. The sturdy young German was required to put out his full strength to keep up with the untiring old man, who never knew the meaning of the word rest.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1810.

Asbury and McKendree on Their Second Tour—The Virginia Conference—Mary Withey's Funeral—New York Conference —New England—Jesse Lee's History—Lee and Asbury—Genesee Conference—Western Conference—Senator Taylor.

THE Virginia Conference was to meet early in February in Petersburg, and to meet it the bishops were compelled to push forward very rapidly. The winter was very severe, and they had rain and snow in abundance. Pressing on through upper South Carolina, they passed through Fayetteville in North Carolina, on to Wilmington, where Asbury was gratified to find things greatly bettered, and on through New Berne and Edenton into eastern Virginia. Rising at four, they were often on the road at five, and rode fifty miles a day. Poor Henry Boehm, the youngest of the company, with an awful cough and fevers, suffered more than his older associates. The ride was made, however, in time to meet the Conference on the 9th of February, and on the 25th he was in Baltimore. After the Conference he made his usual visit to the eastern shore. It was McKendree's first visit, but here Asbury had labored for over thirty years, and those who in infancy were dandled on his knee received him into their homes. The Philadelphia Conference met at Easton, in Maryland, and after its adjournment he went northward. At Chester he

Digitized by Microsoft®

preached the funeral of a good woman whom he often mentions. Mary Withey, "who kept the best inn on the continent, and always received the preachers," entertained the young English missionary in 1772. Under his prayer in family worship she was convicted, and afterwards happily converted. She formed a society in Chester, and for all these years her house had been his home. Asbury said "she had Martha's anxieties and Mary's humility." Thus his old friends were leaving him: Eliza Dalham, Sarah Gough, Mary Tiffin, Mary Rembert—all sisters to the tender-hearted, homeless exile, who deserve to be mentioned in the story of Methodism. He was now passing over ground he had often traveled, and preaching in churches in which he had ministered for twoscore years.

The New York Conference met at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and the New England Conference at Winchester, New Hampshire. After the Conference closed he came into Massachusetts again. He says: "Our preachers get wives and a home and run to their dears almost every night. How can they by personal observation know the state of the families it is a part of their duty to watch over for good?" In Rhode Island he says: "Oh, the death—the formality in religion! Surely the zealous, noisy Methodists cannot but do good here." At Bristol where they had the church with pews and a steeple, he spoke with power to their consciences, "but their favorite preacher was removed, and saints and sinners were displeased." "We are on our lees here—no riding of circuits, local preaching and stations filled in the towns."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Jesse Lee had written his History; the General Conference refused to publish it, and Lee had published it on his own account. Asbury says of it: "I have seen Jesse Lee's History for the first time; it is better than I expected. He has not always presented me under the most favorable aspects. We are all liable to mistakes, and I am unmoved by his. I correct him in one fact: my compelled seclusion at the beginning of the war was in nowise a season of inactivity. On the contrary, except about two months of retirement, it was the most active, most useful, and most afflictive part of my life. If I spent a few dumb Sabbaths, if I did not, for a short time, steal after dark, or through the gloom of the woods, as was my wont, from house to house, to enforce the truth, I (an only child) had left father and mother to proclaim, I shall not be blamed, I hope, when it is known that my patron, Thomas White, was taken into custody by the light-horse patrol; if such things happened to him, what might I expect, a fugitive and an Englishman?" Those who have read the journal of these years can see the justice of this defense. The fact was that the burly Virginian and the delicate, sensitive Englishman were not likely to understand each other. They were equally good men, and each filled well the place in which a good Providence had placed him, but they were as little likely to understand each other as Luther was to understand Calvin. They could each work and work well, but they could not work together. Those who have studied Mr. Wesley's life have seen how impossible it was for him to see eye to eye with any of his equals. No one had a gentler and less selfish

Digitized by Microsoft®

spirit than Asbury, but it was with him "Cæsar or no one." The two men who did the most for Methodism in the east were Lee and Asbury, but the two were as different as Paul and Peter, and agreed no better.

The bishops had, by their volition, set off a part of western New York and Pennsylvania into a Conference, to be called the Genesee, and its first session was to be held at Lyons, in western New York; and after the tour in New England, they made their way toward the village in which it was to be held. After a hard and rapid ride they reached Lyons and held the Conference, July 20, 1810. It included a part of New York, Pennsylvania, and Canada. Asbury spent the rest of the summer visiting camp meetings and preaching in the villages and country places of western Pennsylvania. He was not well, and he said: "Lord, prepare me by thy grace for the patient endurance of hunger, heat, labor, the clownishness of ignorant piety, the impudence of the impious, unreasonable preachers, and more unreasonable heretics and heresy."

The Western Conference was to meet the 1st of November, and the two bishops made a visitation, such as they had made the year before, to the rapidly growing churches of Ohio, and into Kentucky. Bishop Asbury at this time was, perhaps, better acquainted with all parts of the United States than any one man in its boundary. He was known and honored everywhere. The people whom he met, as he trudged along over the hills and mountains of western Pennsylvania, knew him by name. He was no longer what he had once been in the pulpit. His

Digitized by Microsoft®

sermons were disconnected, but earnest—often pathetic—talks. He was sometimes severe, and, he said, he feared too strong in his censures; but all knew the warm, tender heart which lay back of it all. He was sometimes petulant and childish in his intercourse with the preachers, but all who knew him, and by this time nearly all did know him, knew how warmly he loved those he chided. His travels were much over the same routes, and his journals are monotonous accounts of the same hardships. He ought not at his age to have attempted what he did attempt, but on he went untiring and undaunted. The journey through Kentucky was without adventure. He passed through Frankfort, where as yet the Methodists had no house of worship. He preached in Nicholasville and Winchester, and here he saw his old friend Francis Poythress, whose mind had given way, and who was being cared for by his sister, Mrs. Lyons. He says: "If thou be'st he, oh how fallen!"

With much difficulty they made their way to Columbia, where the South Carolina Conference had its session. Senator Taylor, of the United States Congress, was a Methodist, and he lent the Conference his home for its session. As soon as the Conference adjourned Asbury started on his annual visit to Charleston, and in a few days he was in his old quarters in the Bethel parsonage.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1811.

Asbury in His Old Age—Sweetness of His Character—Criticism on Adam Clarke—Visits Canada—Returns to the States—Goes to Ohio and Southward to Georgia.

ASBURY was now sixty-six years old, and had been forty years in America. He was not really an old man, but hard labor, great exposure, and needless austerity had taxed a naturally frail constitution too heavily; and while he was not old in years, he was in fact. He ought to have rested, but he could not. He had been traveling constantly for forty-six years, and he could not be still. So he left South Carolina immediately after the Conference closed, and went to the Virginia Conference at Raleigh, North Carolina, and to the Baltimore Conference at Pipe Creek. He saw the widow of his old friend Henry Willis, and says: "Henry Willis! ah, when shall I look on his like again?" He trembled for these Baltimore preachers, who had such ease and comfort, and wondered how they could retain the spirit of religion amid such pleasant surroundings; and he was much distressed over the marriage of four young preachers, which would take $800 from the funds.

It was a pleasing thing to him now to meet the children of his old parishioners, and find a shelter in their homes. There was no place so dear to him as Maryland. The Howards, the Warfields, the Hig-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ginses, the Owings, the Dallams, the Goughs, the Rogerses, and others, had been his friends for forty years.

The good old man, always gentle and tender, had become more so in his later years, and in his anxiety to do good, so far as we can see, he taxed himself needlessly, and inflicted upon himself such sufferings by his persistence in doing what he believed to be his duty that reading his journal becomes positively painful; but his religious comfort was now continuous. He says: "Sometimes I am ready to cry out, 'Lord, take me home to rest;' courage, my soul!" "At Benjamin Sherwood's I stopped a moment and called the family to prayer." "Came tonight to Major Taylor's. Monday my kind entertainer and family made me a promise to be henceforth for God." "I feel great consolation and perfect love." "I rode sixteen miles to see brother Wilson in his affliction." "Oh, the clover of Baltimore Circuit! Ease, ease, not for me—toil, suffering, coarse food, hard lodging, bugs, fleas, and certain etceteras besides."

He went over the same ground he had traversed in 1772, and found a few of his old friends living. The seed he had then sown had brought forth abundantly, and the Methodists were now numerous, and Methodist churches were all along his route. The old homes which received him then were here still, and he sought them out. The Dallam and Bennett and Garrettson homes were still here, and, while the old people were gone, the children welcomed the patriarchal bishop whom they had loved from their infancy.

Digitized by Microsoft®

It was his rule to speak to all who came into his presence on their soul's interest, which sometimes, he says, he was not ready to do. "I covenanted with General Burleson to pray for him every day." "A poor afflicted widow called on me; for what do I live but to do good and teach others so to do by precept and example?"

New Jersey had not been fruitful ground for the Methodists, and he says: "I am unknown in Jersey, and ever shall be, I presume; after forty years' labor we have not ten thousand in membership." "I read Adam Clarke, and am amused as well as instructed. He indirectly unchristianizes all old bachelors. Woe is me! It was not good for Adam to be alone for better reasons than any Adam Clarke has given."

"We came to Middleburg (Vermont); here is college craft and priestcraft." The heat was great, the roads were wretched, and he was suffering much with his feet; but he pressed on into Canada, where there were quite a number of Methodists, and made his first and only visit to that province. Along the banks of the St. Lawrence and the shores of Lake Ontario a considerable body of settlers, most of them Americans, had fixed their homes; and to them missionaries from the states had been sent, and now there were several circuits supplied with preachers from the Genesee Conference. Bishop Asbury parted from McKendree in Vermont, and with Bela Smith as his guide and Boehm as a companion, he struck out for the new settlements. He crossed Lake Champlain, and preached in a barroom at Plattsburg, and then began his journey to the settlements by entering the wilderness. He came out of

Digitized by Microsoft®

it at the village of the Indians where the St. Regis River enters the St. Lawrence. The Indians put the travelers across the wide and rapid river by lashing their canoes together and putting the horses and men in them. Safely over the river, the missionaries made their way from settlement to settlement, preaching as they went, until they reached Lake Ontario. Here they took a scow as a ferryboat to go across the lake to Sackett's Harbor. It was a fearful voyage, for a storm burst on the rickety old boat; and after being in great peril of wreck, the captain anchored the scow near an island, where Asbury, lying on a pile of hay, and covered with the saddle blankets, passed the night. The next day the weary man, tortured with rheumatism, was in the wilds of western New York. He was too ill to travel, and Boehm, who tells of this journey, left him and went himself to fill an appointment forty miles away, and then by an all-night ride returned and accompanied him to the Genesee Conference, which met in Oneida. This section of western New York was comparatively new, and the rides were hard at the best, but his feet were in a wretched condition; and poor "Spark," his faithful beast, was lame. He was forced to sell him; and as the bishop rode off on his new mare, poor "Spark" nickered his "good-by," and it went to his heart. "Jane," "Fox," and "Spark," the three beasts who bore him, do much to make one hope that Mr. Wesley's theory of the second life of good quadrupeds may be true. The eight Conferences had furnished *twenty-five dollars each* for traveling expenses, of which the bishop had expended one hundred and thirty dollars.

Digitized by Microsoft®

He says he was unspeakably happy in God, and when he reached father Boehm's he wished to rest, but they would have him away to the camp meeting; and with inflamed feet, and a high fever, and a wasting dysentery, he went and *preached*. Good father Boehm had some old Rhenish wine of his own make which refreshed him; and could the weary old bishop have rested long enough he might have sooner recovered, but he could only rest a little while, and then he was on his way again.

Through southern Pennsylvania he went again into Ohio. He crossed the center of the state, and was among old friends, some of whom he had known in Virginia and Maryland. He searched for his old friends, and among them found John Death, whom he had known in the Monongahela. He had been spiritually dead, the bishop said, but his old friend dug him up.

The Western Conference met at Cincinnati, and at this Conference in 1811 James B. Finley was ordained a deacon. Mr. Finley wrote in an after time some very interesting reminiscences of these times, and gives an incident of this Conference which was characteristic. "Bishop Asbury said to the preachers: 'Brethren, if any of you shall have anything peculiar in your circumstances that should be known to the superintendent in making your appointment, if you will drop me a note, I will, as far as will be compatible with the great interests of the Church, endeavor to accommodate you.' I had a great desire to go west, because I had relatives, which called me in that direction, and it would be more pleasant to be with them; so I sat down and

Digitized by Microsoft®

addressed a polite note to the bishop, requesting him to send me west. My request was not granted. I was sent a hundred miles east. I said to him: 'If that's the way you answer prayers, you will get no more prayers from me.' 'Well,' he said, 'be a good son, James, and all things will work together for good.'"

He then came into Kentucky, and here there is a break in his journal, for the next entry puts him in the center of Georgia at Littleberry Bostwick's, in Louisville. He went to Burke, Scriven, Effingham, and reached Savannah, where the new church was just begun, and back again to Camden, South Carolina, where the Conference was held, and to Charleston, where he ended the year 1811.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1812.

Near the Close—General Conference—Presiding Eldership—Benson's Life of Fletcher—Ohio—Nashville.

THE Virginia Conference was to meet in Richmond, February 20, and Asbury made his way directly to it. It was the first session of a Methodist Conference in Richmond. The old parts of Virginia where Methodism had won such triumphs were now being largely drawn upon for emigrants to the south and west, but the newer parts of the state were rapidly filling up. He says little of the Conference session, save that the number of preachers stationed was smaller than usual. The Conference began on Thursday, the 20th. Among the preachers who attended the Conference was Dr. Samuel K. Jennings, who was selected afterwards as Asbury's biographer, and who, he says, was much followed. Leaving Richmond as soon as Conference adjourned, he rode down the James and visited again Williamsburg and Yorktown. He found this ancient city declining in numbers and in wealth because of the decrease of trade and the prevalence of strong drink.

He was on his way to the Baltimore Conference, which was to meet at Leesburg on the 20th of March. Here in this good old city there was a happy Conference, as there was in Philadelphia. The General Conference of 1812, the first delegated General Conference, was to meet in New York, and on May 1st

Digitized by Microsoft®

it convened. The General Convention of 1808 had restricted the powers of the General Conference, and Asbury, who was very jealous of any limit upon the powers of the bishops to appoint, had hoped that after the decisive action of the General Conference of 1808 the agitation about the eldership would cease, but he found himself greatly deceived. His old colleagues, Lee and Snethen, were on the side of the progressives, who desired to make the presiding elders elective. These, as Asbury said, were great men, but they were defeated. While Asbury was traveling through Georgia, twenty years before, he had met Colonel Few, who was a Marylander and one of the first senators from Georgia. He had removed to New York, and here Asbury met him and breakfasted with him. The wife of brother Seney, whose descendant, George I. Seney, has made his name and memory so precious, had been a leader in the good work of raising a handsome contribution for the poor preachers of the New England Conference, which Asbury carried with him. One of his striking characteristics was his attachment to old friends and to the homes in which he had stayed. For years together he never changed his stopping places, and what Perry Hall in Maryland, and Lott Ballard's in North Carolina, and Rembert's in South Carolina, and Grant's in Georgia were, was mother Sherwood's, twenty-four miles from New York. At Albany the New York Conference was to convene. It met at the same time with the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church. In Lynn, where the first Methodist chapel was built, he was disturbed by the proposition to place a steeple on the new meeting-

Digitized by Microsoft®

house, and he said if it was done it must not be by Methodist order or by Methodist money. After leaving Lynn, they went without adventure to western New York, where, in Lyons again, the Genesee Conference was to be held. He found his old friends scattered all over this new country, and reached Lyons in good time, where he had a pleasant session of the Conference, and then through the excessive heat of July he pressed over these wild hills into Pennsylvania. In those days there was a general laxity in the matter of drinking alcoholic liquors, and among these bibulous Germans drinking was all but universal. Asbury was always an uncompromising foe of drink of all kinds. He says: "The Germans are decent in their behavior in this neighborhood, and it would be more so were it not for vile whisky—this is the prime curse of the United States."

On his way southward he passed through Middletown, Maryland, where he had at last a small chapel, and to Hagerstown, where he preached in the new church. He rode on through Cumberland, and visited the camp ground near by. He made it a rule to speak to all he met on the subject of their soul's interest, and his gray hairs and saintly aspect always secured to him a hearing. While he was on this trip he read, as he rested, Benson's Life of Fletcher, and says: "Comparing myself with Fletcher, what am I in piety, wisdom, labor, or usefulness? God be gracious unto me." The recluse of Madeley and the working bishop of America could not well be compared; but if they were to be, the American bishop is not the one who would stand lowest in the

Digitized by Microsoft®

popular verdict. The old man's heart was gladdened by seeing the immense crowds who flocked to the camp grounds which he visited on his way to the growing west. He passed through Ohio, and attended the first session of the Ohio Conference, which met in Chillicothe, October 1. His rest at night had been broken. A severe neuralgia had kept him awake, and yet he preached three times at this Conference. On the last day he says his strength failed. "I want sleep, sleep, sleep." On Wednesday, exhausted, he stole away and slept for three hours, and then they called him up to read the stations.

The Tennessee Conference was to meet near Nashville on the 1st of November, and he must try to reach it; and though feverish and worn as he was, he began the journey. Through Ohio they came into Kentucky, and then through Kentucky into Middle Tennessee. On this tour he made his first visit to Louisville, Kentucky, which he says was "a growing town, where we had a neat brick house, thirty by thirty-eight;" and then directly to Nashville, where the kind jailer took them in charge and entertained them. There was now in Nashville a new neat brick house, thirty-four feet square, with galleries. Green Hill, his old North Carolina friend, was living not far from Nashville, and he visited him and went on to the camp ground at Fountain Head, where the Conference was held; and then over rocks, hills, roots, and stumps he made his way to East Tennessee, across the Cumberland mountains; and then through North Carolina into South Carolina; and exposed to the intense cold of December, he reached

Digitized by Microsoft®

Charleston, where the Conference was to meet, December 19.

He made the long circuit without resting a week. Mile by mile he kept up with his more vigorous companions. He had virtually given the bishop's work into the hands of his colleague. He ordained and preached and advised about appointments, but he realized the fact that he was no longer able to do the work of a bishop. He had now but one work, and it was to do as much good as he could. He carried Bibles with him to give away. He scattered tracts. He visited the sick and dying. He spoke to all about their souls, and prayed wherever he stopped, either at inn or private house. He had reached a period of perfect rest in his religious experience. The revival fire was burning wherever he went, the burdens of the superintendency were no longer resting heavily upon him, and his health, though by no means good, was as strong as it had been for some years. He was greatly beloved, and he was very happy in knowing that he was. Of no man could it be said more truly than of him that his walk was in heaven and that his life was hid with Christ in God. He had now neared the end of his labors, and was to have only one more year of really efficient work. Henceforth the shadows deepened, and the time when no man can work drew on rapidly, but as yet he did not realize the fact that the time for rest was near at hand, and worked on as aforetime.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XL.

1813.

Asbury's Last Effective Year—Northward Again—Whitehead's Life of Wesley—Things in New England—Western Journal—Epistle to McKendree—Charleston Again.

IN 1813 the good old bishop was steadily declining. He had now been forty-two years in America and nearly fifty years in the regular ministry. Exposure, and perhaps injudicious medication, had done much to break him down, but his indomitable will kept him on his feet. The first of January, 1813, found him in Georgetown, South Carolina. After twenty-nine years of labor they had a church and a preacher's home in Georgetown, and they had one thousand black and one hundred white members—most of them women—in the society. He spent a few days catching up with his correspondence, and then, lame and with high fever, through the rain he came to Fayetteville, North Carolina. With a blistered foot, too feeble to walk to church, he was carried into it, where he preached sitting, and ordained two deacons and one elder. He came back to his lodgings with a high fever and applied four blisters, and for two days was closely confined to his bed. At Wilmington he was carried into the church and preached morning and evening, and then with swollen feet he made his way by his usual route, stemming the cold wind, to his friend Ballard's. He was sadly lame, and could not wear his leather shoe, but he

Digitized by Microsoft®

pressed on, preaching and working. At Thomas Lee's he preached and gained a fever and a clear conscience by his labors. On his way he got an insight into Whitehead's Life of Wesley. His only comment on this book, so offensive to the early Methodists, is: "I have looked into Whitehead's Life of Wesley. He is vilified. Oh, shame!" Through southeastern Virginia and eastern Virginia he made his way by the usual route into Maryland, preaching as he went, though he could not stand. At last he reached Baltimore. His old friend Otterbein came to see him. Asbury was remarkable for the strength and continuance of his friendships. He never seems to have lost a friend to whom he had given his heart without reserve, and this good old German was especially dear to him. Conference was in session, and Asbury ordained the deacons and McKendree the elders. If the good old bishop had any weakness which was apparently pronounced, it was his failure to recognize in his journal the labors of others besides himself; and unless one knew it to be a fact, he would not learn from the journal that McKendree was with him at this or at other Conferences. The war was on the land, and there were confusion and danger, but he pressed on; his friends would gladly have sheltered him and relieved him from toil and exposure, but he felt that he must work on, and, feeble as he was, he says he "preached nearly two hours and had gracious access to God." And on the next day he says: "I was weary and faint, and returned to my sick bed to take medicine." The dear old bishop needed some protection from his friends as well as from himself, for he says: "After a ride of twenty-five

Digitized by Microsoft®

miles I was requested to preach at a moment's warning, and I found an assembly ready. It would seem as if the preachers think they are committing a sin if they do not appoint preaching for me every day, and often twice a day. Lord, support us in our labor, and we will not murmur." The New York Conference was held, and he went into New England and to New Hampshire, where he stopped to dine with the "nice Websters, in Greenfield." "My knee," he said, "is swelled again." He was not pleased with Winchester, where the Conference met, nor, for all that, with the state of religion in the country. "Like priest, like people, in these parts, both judicially blind. This town is not reformed by Methodist Conference or Methodist preaching." He made his annual tour through the New England states, preaching as he went. He was never quite able to get reconciled to New England ways, and says: "I have difficulties to encounter, but I must be silent; my mind is in God. In New England we sing, we build houses, we eat, and stand at prayer. Here preachers locate and people support them, and have traveling preachers also. Were I to labor forty-two years more, I suppose I should not succeed in getting things right. Preachers have been sent away from Newport by an apostate. Oh, vain steeple houses, bells (organs by and by)! these things are against me and contrary to the simplicity of Christ. We have made a stand in the New England Conferences against steeples and pews, and shall probably give up the houses unless the pews are taken out."

The old bishop's favorite remedy for his many physical ills seemed to be tartar emetic. No Thomp-

Digitized by Microsoft®

sonian of later day ever relied more on the tincture of lobelia than he did on tartar, and when he was very unwell he had recourse to this remedy. He said: "My dinner and supper to-day have been tartar emetic."

He was an intense Methodist, there could be no question of that; and it could not be said that he had a lofty opinion of the piety of other Churches, and especially of Congregationalists, or, as he called them, Presbyterians; but he despised narrow bigotry, and says: "I never knew the state of the Methodist chapel in New Durham until now. It was bought of the Presbyterians, carried five miles and rebuilt within hearing of the Independents' church. There is surely little of the mind of Christ in all this, and I will preach no more in it. Should the Methodists have imitated the low Dutch who treated them exactly thus in Albany?"

The travelers pressed on to New York to the Genesee Conference, which met in Oneida county. The dear old man says pathetically: "I have suffered much from hunger, heat, and sickness in the last two hundred and seventy miles. If we were disposed to stop at taverns, which we are not, our funds would not allow it always when we need refreshment and food. We have not brethren in every place, and the east is not hospitable Maryland, or the south." The journey southward, through the rough country of southern New York and northern Pennsylvania, was one of usual difficulty those rude days. At all the houses at which he stopped, either to spend the night or to dine, he had religious service; and generally his services were respectfully received, but not always

Digitized by Microsoft®

so. He says: "We put into a house at the Great Bend, in Pennsylvania, and stopped to dine. Here I lectured, sung, and prayed with the infidels of the house; some stared, some smiled, and some wept. The lady asked me to call again as I passed. 'Yes, madam; on condition you will do two things: read your Bible, and betake yourself to prayer.'" On his way he stopped at Daniel Montgomery's. His wife, he said, was his old friend Mollie Wallis; "but oh, how changed in forty-two years! Time has been eighty years at work on her wrinkled face." At Jacob Gerhart's the company went to bed and "I," he says, "sat up hulling peas, and I am to preach at six o'clock." On the next day, as they traveled, "we asked for food, and were told a tavern was near. Our money was scarce. We had borrowed five dollars, which will barely be enough, perhaps, to bring us through this inhospitable district."

It was during this tour that he wrote that long, rambling epistle to McKendree, which is published in full in Paine's Life of McKendree, giving his views of the episcopacy. Feeble as he was, he went to camp meetings, and pressed on his way to the Ohio Conference, which met at Chillicothe on September 1; and then to Kentucky to the Tennessee Conference, which met at Reese Chapel. He realized that his sun was setting, and as he stopped to rest he wrote his valedictory address to the presiding elders. He says little in his journal of the toils of this weary journey. He came through North Carolina and South Carolina into Georgia. He rode through Georgia as far as Savannah, and into South Carolina again; spent a little while in Charleston, and closed

Digitized by Microsoft®

the last year of unbroken toil at Rembert's. This was Asbury's last year of continuous toil. The next two years of his life were broken into by repeated attacks which confined him to his bed. He realized that the end was not far off, and very grandly he prepared for his departure. He surrendered to his colleague the entire charge of the work, wrote his farewell to the presiding elders, made his will, and then went on doing all he could. The work he had done during the year had been at great cost of suffering, and all could see, save the man himself, that he ought to have sought some quiet home and waited for his change; but the feebler he grew the harder he worked.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XLI.

1814–1815.

The Sun Going Down—Goes Northward—Long Attack of Sickness in Pennsylvania—John Wesley Bond—McKendree Crippled—Reaches Nashville—Georgia for the Last Time—Goes Northward—The West Again—Surrenders All Control to McKendree.

ASBURY spent ten days in Charleston and recruited his strength somewhat, and if he could have been persuaded to remain longer in its bracing and balmy air his life might have been prolonged; but he had suffered so much and was so accustomed to the invalid life he had led that while he could ride he felt that he could not rest. Time was so short, he said, he must go. On January 1, 1814, he preached at Rembert's, and in company with some of his South Carolina brethren he began his journey. He visited and prayed with his old friends along the route, and reached Fayetteville in five days.

He now had but one topic in every sermon. "He was divinely impressed," he said, "to preach sanctification in every sermon." The South Carolina Conference met in Fayetteville, and was a heavenly, spiritual, and united Conference. After its adjournment he remained a week, and then, enjoying great peace of mind, he came away. On this journey he met William Glendening. The old Scotchman had once been his warm friend, and afterwards his stern opponent; but as was the case with O'Kelly, so now with Glendening, the old veterans met and embraced

Digitized by Microsoft®

each other, and parted in peace. Preaching and visiting his brethren, he made his way to Norfolk, where the Virginia Conference was to meet; but the exposure had been too great for him, and when he reached Norfolk he had a severe attack of pleurisy, which confined him for two weeks; but he got out of his sick bed, and through excessive cold made his way to Baltimore. During the whole session he was sick, but he preached the funeral sermon of his dear friend Otterbein. He says of him: "Forty years have I known the retiring modesty of this man of God, towering, majestic, above his fellows in learning, wisdom, and grace, and yet seeking to be known only of God and the people of God. He had been sixty years a minister, fifty years a converted one." The friendship between Otterbein and Asbury was very beautiful. The quiet, self-poised, cultivated German was worthy of the love the sturdy, self-taught Englishman felt for him.

Feeble as Asbury was, he still pressed on, but it was evident to all that he could not long continue this course. He left Baltimore on his northern tour, and his journal says: "On the 25th of April I preached at Bethel. We had a rainy day, and my flesh failed. I rested at Bales's, greatly spent with labor. We should have failed in our march through Jersey, but we have great kindness and attentions, and have great accommodations." The next entry is in July: "I return to my journal after an interval of twelve weeks. I have been ill indeed." The attention the dear old bishop received was all that could be rendered, but as soon as he could be lifted into his little covered wagon he began his journey.

Digitized by Microsoft®

The kind people of Philadelphia sent him a neat carriage, and the Baltimore Conference detailed John Wesley Bond to attend him on his journey. This young man, who was so dear to Asbury, was the brother of the distinguished Thomas E. Bond, who was the famous editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, and the uncle of the not less distinguished Thomas E. Bond, Jr., editor of the *Baltimore Christian Advocate*. John Wesley Bond was a very pious, very earnest young man, and devoted to Asbury. He did much for the relief of the poor invalid, and perhaps shortened his own life by his devotion to him. Despite his feebleness, Asbury started with his companion westward. He was very happy in his religious life. He says: "I groan one minute with pain and shout glory the next." In their comfortable two-horse carriage they made their way over horrible roads toward Ohio, and then through the state to Cincinnati. He was riding over bad roads, sick and weary, trying to preach and exhort at every stopping place. To add to his distress, McKendree had been thrown from his horse and badly crippled, and was unable to get to Cincinnati to the Conference. As neither bishop could preside, John Sale did so. The old bishop made out a plan of appointments and then hurried away through Kentucky to the seat of the Tennessee Conference, which included a considerable part of Kentucky.

Sick as he was, he had intended to make an effort to reach the Natchez country; but Bishop McKendree was so lame that Bishop Asbury said it was doubtful as to whether he could reach the South Carolina Conference in time, and for that reason alone

Digitized by Microsoft®

he gave up the attempt. With his colleague he braved the oft-crossed Cumberland and Alleghany mountains again, passed through South Carolina, and went into Georgia, and reached Milledgeville. He was so feeble that he could not be heard, but he attempted to preach at the ordination, and after the adjournment of Conference he and his assistants moved toward Charleston. In Augusta, in the house of Asaph Waterman, he preached his last sermon in Georgia, and left the state the next day to return to it no more. He did not go, as was his custom, to Charleston, but made his way through South Carolina and North Carolina and by his oft-traveled route to Maryland. There is nothing in the account he gives save the same story of travel and suffering until the reader feels the pain, and longs for some one to lay his hand on him and stay him in his progress.

He was dying with senile consumption, but he would not pause. Through the eastern shore, through Delaware, through Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the weary man moved to New York. "Poor, wheezing, groaning, coughing Francis," as he called himself, came into the New York Conference and spent a few hours. Although he could not preach or talk long, he could plan; and he did that, and went on toward New England, to go on to the seat of the New England Conference. He was unable to preside, but George Pickering did that for him, and he did the ordaining and the planning. Although it was the 10th of June, they had rain and snow. McKendree had gone to western New York to meet the Genesee Conference, and they were to meet again at

Digitized by Microsoft®

the Ohio Conference in September. It was with the usual difficulty that he made this journey, but he reached Lebanon in good time. On the way he distributed hundreds of Testaments, visited many of his old friends, and preached at the camp meetings. Of course he was too feeble to be heard, but the people were anxious to get only a sight of the aged and venerated apostle. He and Bishop McKendree had now an earnest talk. "I told Bishop McKendree the western part of the empire would be the glory of America for the poor and pious; that it ought to have five Conferences, and as far as I could I traced out the lines and boundaries. I told my colleague that having passed the first allotted period—seventy years—and being, as he knew, out of health, it could not be expected that I could visit the extremities, every year, sitting in eight, and it might be twelve, Conferences, and traveling six thousand miles in eight months. If I was able to keep up with the Conferences I could not be expected to preside at more *than every other one.* As to the stations, I should never exhibit a plan unfinished, but still get all the information in my power. The plan I might be laboring on would always be submitted to such eyes as ought to see it, and the measure I meted to others I should expect to receive." This was a characteristic utterance, and there is a pathos in the statement that he would not expect to preside over more than half of the Conferences, and his appointments should be made by himself. He attempted to preach the memorial sermon for Dr. Coke, and then went into Tennessee to meet the Tennessee Conference in Wilson county. Although he had spoken so

Digitized by Microsoft®

decidedly to Bishop McKendree at the Ohio Conference, when he reached the Tennessee Conference he said: "My eyes fail; I will resign the stations to Bishop McKendree; I will take away my feet. It is my fifty-fifth year of ministry and forty-fifth of labor in America. My mind enjoys great peace and divine consolation; my health is better, but whether health, life, or death, good is the will of the Lord. I will trust him and will praise him. He is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Glory! glory! glory!"

And thus he surrendered his commission. He had been in sole command of the army for all these years, and had allowed none to interfere with his mandate; but now he lays it down, and henceforth leaves to another to do the duty so long resting upon him. He turned his face eastward, and by the 5th of December he stopped at the home of Wesley Harrison, the son of Thomas Harrison, who had been the first to receive him in his visit to Harrisonburg, Virginia; and from his house he turned his face southward on his way to Charleston. By December 20th, finding that he would not be able to make the journey, he turned back at Granby, South Carolina, and the last entry in his journal was made, according to the printed page, on the 7th of December. The journal says he was in Virginia November 1. This was an error. He was in Middle Tennessee the first of November, and could not possibly have reached Virginia in five days. The editor has evidently been misled by the names of Wesley and Thomas Harrison, and the fact stated that their father received him at Harrisonburg, Virginia. He evidently took the nearest route

Digitized by Microsoft®

to South Carolina, and passed again over the mountains into Buncombe county and then into the upper part of South Carolina. The entry was no doubt made by the editor, who, careful as he was, made a number of small mistakes. Asbury says he came to Wesley Harrison's, then to Thomas Harrison's. He was in Sumner county, Tennessee, when he started to Charleston. He says: "We came upon the turnpike—a disgrace to the state." He came to father Holt's, and in a few days was at Wesley Harrison's, then by Robert Harrison's, Boling's, Barnett's, Mills's, Glover's, Arrington's, Means's. These names indicate the route he pursued, which was through East Tennessee, western North Carolina, and upper South Carolina to Columbia. He had taken a month for the tour, and now turned his course from Columbia toward Charleston; but at Granby he found it would be useless to attempt to make the journey, and he turned his face northward. The last entry he ever made in his journal was made here, and is Thursday, 7th of December: "We met a storm and stopped at William Baker's, Granby." He was dying with consumption, and the disease was aggravated by a severe influenza. He knew it would be useless to go farther, and he turned his way toward Maryland.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XLII.

1816.

Asbury's Last Journey—The Sun Goes Down—Granby, South Carolina—Journey to Richmond—Last Sermon—Reaches Mr. Arnold's—Death Scene.

GRANBY was a small village in the central part of South Carolina, and when the invalid bishop realized the fact that he could not reach Charleston for the Conference he decided to return to Maryland, so as to be at the session of the General Conference in May. We have no record of this journey, the last he made. It is likely that he went by Camden and Fayetteville and Wilmington, and along the eastern shore of North Carolina and Virginia to Norfolk, and then turned toward Richmond. Along this route he had many friends and many homes, and the journey could be made in easy stages. He preached, or attempted to preach, to the last. He was wasted to a skeleton, and could not do more than speak while sitting, in tones too low for any but a very few to hear, but he would not allow himself any repose. It was nearly three months after he left Granby before he reached Richmond, Virginia. He wished, he said, once more to preach here, and he was borne in the arms of his brethren to the church and seated upon a table, and with feeble voice, after pausing to recover his breath, he preached for nearly an hour with much feeling from Romans ix. 28: "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because

Digitized by Microsoft®

a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." The audience were much affected. It was to them as a voice from another world. He felt that he was speaking to them for the last time, and he spoke with the earnestness and tenderness of a dying man. When the rambling, tender talk was finished they bore the attenuated form of the dying man to the carriage, and he left the pulpit which he had entered at sixteen years old to return to it no more. He had probably preached more sermons at the time he ceased his work than any other man then in the world. Mr. Wesley, who went to crowded cities and populous villages by easy riding, may have preached oftener when he lived, but it is, I think, a fact that Asbury, up to the time he died, had preached more sermons than any other man then living in the world. From Maine to Tennessee, from Ohio to the borders of Florida, his voice had been heard. His zeal never knew any abatement, and he never stayed on his way, unless he was too ill to ride. But now his work was done. In October, 1771, he preached his first sermon in America in Philadelphia; in March, 1816, forty-five years afterwards, he preached for the last time in Richmond, Virginia.

He rested on Monday, and started on his journey on Tuesday. He went by slow stages until Friday, when he reached the home of his old friend George Arnold, in Spottsylvania, Virginia, twenty miles from Fredericksburg, which he was trying to reach by the Sabbath. Finding it impossible to go forward, he did not make the attempt. He grew worse, and his friends wished to send for a physician, but he would not consent, saying that before he could reach

Digitized by Microsoft®

him he would be gone. He was asked if, in view of death, he had anything to communicate. He said he had fully expressed his mind in relation to the Church in his address to the bishop and to the General Conference. He had nothing more to add.

Sunday morning came, and he asked if it was not time for service, and, recollecting himself, he requested the family to be called together. This was done, and his young companion, at his request, chose the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, which he read and expounded. During these exercises he appeared calm and much engaged in devotion. He grew feebler, and his speech began to fail. Seeing the distress of his son John, as he called young Bond, he raised his hand and looked upon him with a smile of joy, and then, raising both hands, he bent his head on the hand of his dear son and breathed his life out. He was in his seventy-first year. His death took place on the 21st day of March, 1816. He was buried by those who were with him in the family burying ground of Mr. Arnold, but at the session of the General Conference the remains were brought to Baltimore and deposited in a vault under the pulpit of the Eutaw-street Church.

The insignificant town he had entered forty years before, and in which he had begun a meeting that seemed to promise so little, was now a large and wealthy city. He was known to all its people and honored by them all. A vast concourse of citizens and several clergymen of other denominations followed the corpse from Light street to the burial place on Eutaw, and the General Conference, with McKendree and the English representative, Black,

Digitized by Microsoft®

at its head, walked in sad procession to the church, and he was laid to rest. The Methodists of the city afterwards purchased a handsome body of land near the city and opened Mount Olivet cemetery, to which his remains were removed, and in which they now lie; and not far from these remains lie those of his old associate and companion Jesse Lee, who died the latter part of the same year in which Asbury died.

With the death of Asbury passed away the man who had exerted a mightier influence over America than any other who had ever lived in it. He had entered upon the work of the ministry in America when the Methodists were but a mere handful. He had become the most influential man among the Methodist preachers before he was appointed to the superintendency, and that influence continued unlimited for forty years after he was elected a bishop. His voice was the most potent in the land. Neither Ignatius Loyola nor John Wesley had a greater power over those associated with them than this saddler apprentice of Birmingham, and neither of them had so mighty a personal influence upon so many people. His place in the history of American civilization has not been accorded, and even many of those who have entered into the fruit of his labor have not properly rated this man who planned so well and did so much. He was not like Luther, or Wesley, or Calvin, a man of many sides. He was remarkable in that he had but one aim and but one way to advance it. His aim was simply to save men from sin, and his way to advance that was by the simple preaching of the gospel. He had full faith in the gospel, and he believed if it was preached

Digitized by Microsoft®

and accepted that all other things would follow in its wake. He had no faith in government or education or in anything human apart from the gospel, and he believed that he had but one work to do, and that was to preach it; and from the time he left his place on the saddler's bench for his circuit till the end, this was his work.

The story written in these pages has been a story of most heroic encounter with difficulties and of unceasing toil. The opening of the western country, the subjugation of the Indian tribes, the impetus given to emigration from the older to the newer states, demanded action quick and sharp. The overthrow of the state churches in the south, the wonderful interest which had been aroused in religious matters all over the land, had called for some great leader who knew what to do and how to do it. Asbury was eminently adapted to that place, and filled it as perhaps no other man could have done. He began his work when there was not a turnpike nor a stage line in America, and when the paths to the wilderness were Indian trails. He had gone into the wilderness while the war whoop of the savage was still in the ears of those to whom he preached. The hardships he was compelled to endure were never intermitted, and to add to it all he was an invalid a large part of the time. He saw, however, the labor of his hands as no other man perhaps has ever seen it. The year he began his work there were less than five hundred Methodists in America; when he died there were two hundred and fourteen thousand. The Church had been organized and was in working order in every part of the field. He had breathed his

Digitized by Microsoft®

spirit into hundreds of itinerant and local preachers, and when he ceased at once to work and live the Church to which he gave his life was established over all the United States.

Realizing a few years before his death that he was near his end, he made his will. He had never made or tried to make a dollar. His small income, the same as that allowed every traveling preacher, sufficed for his moderate wants, and from that he was able to assist his aged parents. After they died he gave what he could save to the widows of itinerant preachers and to the needy preachers he met on his tours. Some friends made him sundry bequests, and he had two thousand dollars of his own in his old age. He bequeathed that to the widows of his old associates, providing that every child who bore his name should have a Bible furnished to him by his executors.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XLIII.

Asbury's Religious Experience.

NO honest biography of Asbury can be written which does not give prominence to his account of his personal religious experience. In no private diary is there a fuller exhibit given of all the phases of one's inner life than Asbury gives in the pages of his honest and homely journal. He was a good child — prayerful, obedient, and truthful. When quite a child he was awakened to the need of conversion, and at twelve years of age was converted. He knew it and rejoiced in it, and, though through a child's ignorance he afterwards lost the evidence, he never lost the character of a Christian, and when he was sixteen he began to preach. His religious life was serious, self-denying, and emotional. All Methodists in that day, after a conscious conversion, began to seek for what they called the removal of the least and last remains of the carnal mind, and Asbury began to seek for it with all his heart, and in the ardor of boyhood and in his early and happy experience he thought he had attained it, but he afterwards decided that he was mistaken. He had almost an uninterrupted witness of acceptance with God, and had a constant dominion over sin and the witness of his own spirit that he was pure in his intentions; but he was confident that that lofty experience Mr. Wesley pictured as Christian perfection he had not reached when he came to America, nor for many years afterwards.

Digitized by Microsoft®

During his first years in America, while he records a story of great comforts, he wrote bitter things against himself oftentimes, and censures himself for sundry failings. Thus in 1772: "Found an inattention to study, an unsettled frame of mind, and much backwardness in prayer. Lord, help me with active warmth to move." "Visited an old man who was sick, but came away without prayer, and was justly blamed, both by my friends and myself. Lord, forgive my secret and open faults." "My heart is still distressed for want of more religion. I long to be wholly given up, and to seek no favor but what cometh from God alone." "A cloud rested on my mind, which was occasioned by talking and jesting. I also feel at times tempted to impatience and pride of heart." "In this journey I have my soul comfortable and alive to God." "On Saturday all my soul was love. No desire for anything, but God had place in my heart. Keep me, O Lord, in this delightful, blessed frame!" On Tuesday he says: "My foolish heart felt rather disposed to murmuring, pride, and discontent. Lord, pardon me, and grant me grace." The next day he says: "My conscience reproves me for the appearance of levity."

These are but specimen extracts from his early journal. Sometimes he is very happy after being very much depressed, condemning himself for what appears to us to have been neither errors nor sins; but, despite his changing moods, he was always faithful. He had one desire: to live entirely for God. Resigned, submissive, untiring, he pressed on the way.

On June 14, 1774, he says: "My heart seems wholly

Digitized by Microsoft®

devoted to God, and he favors me with power over all outward and inward sin. Some people, if they felt as I feel at present, would, perhaps, conclude they were saved from all indwelling sin." The next day he says: "My soul was under heavy exercises and much troubled by manifold temptations. I feel it hurtful to lay too much on myself. Lord, make thy face to shine upon me, and make me always joyful in thy salvation."

These extracts from his journal are merely samples of numerous entries, and they tell the same story; a constant reaching forward after the highest attainments and varying sensations—sometimes very happy, sometimes very much depressed.

On Sunday, August 6, 1786, he says: "A pleasing thought passed through my mind. It was this: that I was saved from the remains of sin. As yet, I have felt no returns thereof." But on October 5, of the same year, he says: "My soul is under deep exercise on account of the deadness of the people and my own want of fervor and holiness of heart."

The effort to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion about the extent of the good work wrought in his soul had been so unsatisfactory that for some years he seems to have almost given over any effort to make an exact record of it. His affections never varied; his devotion to duty knew no intermission; his prayerfulness and his attention to his religious duties never slackened: but his introspection was to a large degree interfered with by the demands of his work upon him. His sky grew brighter as the years passed on, and during the days of his long invalid life there was a constant serenity. He had re-

Digitized by Microsoft®

ceived, as all the Methodists had, the teachings of Mr. Wesley on the possibility of Christian perfection secured instantly by faith, and was patiently waiting, as he was earnestly groaning, for the hour when the consciousness would be given him that his soul was filled with pure love.

In 1803 he said: "My general experience is: close communion with God, holy fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, a will resigned, frequent addresses to the throne of grace." And January 9 he says: "I feel it my duty to speak chiefly upon perfection, and, above all, to strive to attain unto that which I preach." March 7: "I find the way of holiness very narrow to walk in or to preach." In April, 1803, he says: "My mind is in a great calm after the tumult of the Baltimore Conference—in addition to the charge of the superintendency to feel and to live perfect love."

This was thirty-two years after he came to America, when he was fifty-eight years old; and, as far as I can find it, this is the first positive statement that what he sought for he had found. As in the case of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, there is nowhere a marked line when he, by a wonderful transition, passed into the land of perfect peace. It was, as far as his journal tells the story, a constant progress, leading him at last into the land of Beulah.

The study of a life like his, where all the throbbings of an earnest heart are seen, cannot but be a profitable exercise. When we note the experiences through which he passed, and when his life in its external features is looked at, we find that an example of advanced holiness is presented which has

Digitized by Microsoft®

rarely been equaled in this world. Perhaps he erred, I may say confidently he did err, in following his ideas of self-denial to the extent he did. Not Loyola, with his scourge, had less pity on his poor, feeble frame than Asbury on himself. He pitied every being but himself. The poorest slave, who was so much the object of his pity, was better treated by the cruelest master than Asbury treated his poor, frail, emaciated body. Fasting when he was barely able to walk, facing bleak winter when God's laws called him to shelter, riding in hot suns when he needed shade, rising from a bed when exhausted nature bade him stay, he suffered when God would have spared him. His austerity toward himself made him not sour, but did make him exacting toward others, and he had less love for the things God had made lovely than was his privilege and, perhaps, his duty. God honored him greatly, and for years he walked in the secret place of the Almighty. His life was hid with Christ in God.

Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, were good men all; but in the holiness of his life and in the extent of his usefulness, Francis Asbury was behind none of them.

Digitized by Microsoft®

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Character of Francis Asbury.

IN my opinion Francis Asbury has been the worst misread man in the history of the first men of American Methodism. When fair and well-informed historians give an estimate of him so different from that I entertain, I may hesitate in giving utterance to my conclusions; but a long and very careful study of a very transparent life has, I think, qualified me for making a verdict.

By the older class of Methodists he was looked upon almost with awe. He was the ideal Christian. Mr. Wesley had no more the confidence of the English Wesleyans, Calvin's followers were not blinder in their attachment to the great reformer, than the preachers brought into the work in America were to Asbury. Many of the latter-day Methodists do not place him on this high pedestal. They know little of him, and judging him from the allusions to him in history they have failed by a great deal to recognize his true worth.

I do not think, rating men as they are rated by men, that Asbury was intellectually a great man. Many of the leaders of the Methodist movement were beyond him in extraordinary endowments, but in practical common sense he was behind none of them. Mr. Wesley's wondrous power to rule men, and his correct idea of what was to be done, was not beyond

Digitized by Microsoft®

that of Asbury. In directing the work of the Church as a pastor he made few mistakes, and when he was invested with the bishopric his judgment was nearly always to be relied on. Sometimes he overrated a man, sometimes he undervalued him, but generally his estimate was a correct one. He saw the field, he realized the need of the times, and he had at once a man to supply the need. He was a general commanding, and his campaign was always well planned and wide-sweeping.

He was a diligent student. He knew enough of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew to read the Bible in them. He was well read in the theology of the Wesleyans, was acquainted with the best of the old Puritan divines, and he read much history, both profane and sacred, and was very fond of religious biography. With polite literature he had no acquaintance at all, and perhaps he regarded its study as something rather to be avoided than to be pursued. He was a very decided and unswerving man. The sturdiness of his race found its best example in him. He was absolutely fearless, and was as immovable as granite when principle was involved. There have been a few points at which I was compelled to admit that the adhering to what he believed to be right led him to do some violence to what I thought were the rights of others, but he never did anything *he* could not defend, nor ever asked one to do anything when *he* did not believe he ought to do it.

I would not be perfectly fair if I did not admit that in some respects Mr. Asbury seems to have been a narrow man. His ideas of ministerial support, of the obligations of a people to their pastor, and of a

Digitized by Microsoft®

pastor to his family, were exceedingly contracted. He unwillingly encouraged good men to be shamefully penurious in their gifts to good causes, and laid such stress upon plainness that he encouraged covetousness. The gold on a schoolgirl's person seemed more offensive to him than the gold hid in her father's coffers, if that father was a plain man of steady ways. He could not recognize the fact that the Methodists were growing rich. They were poor when he first knew them, and he wanted them to stay so. He cared comparatively little for advanced education among ministers. He wanted piety, zeal, and heroism in his preachers, and then he was content if they knew how to use the English tongue. He was more concerned about the circuit in the wilderness than the cathedral in the city. He was not always tolerant. What he said as true he thought was true, and he had no disposition to reopen the question. When men differed with him they were wrong, and that was the end of it.

His idea of the piety of other preachers but the Methodists was not high. Especially did he disparage the New Englanders. That he was prepared to do them justice one will not be likely to admit who takes into consideration his very rapid transit through the states, and the little intercourse he had with Calvinists.

The story of his life is the story of heroic self-sacrifice, and the magnificent campaigns which he planned and which he so successfully carried out are without a parallel in the history of the world.

He was imperious, a very autocrat in the domain in which he had been made dictator, but he was a dic-

Digitized by Microsoft®

tator for the good of others alone. He required instant obedience to his commands, even when he ordered difficult and sometimes apparently impossible things to be done, but he was as willing to share the danger as he was to ask another to face it.

That he was sometimes petulant, and sometimes said things which were unduly severe, was doubtless true. He did not admire Rankin, nor Jesse Lee, nor O'Kelly, nor Glendening, nor sundry others who opposed him; they thought he was overbearing, and he thought they were untrustworthy, and to his intimate friends he spoke his mind freely of these men, and in no mild terms. We of this day clearly see that he misread some of them. Once he turned his back on Jesse Lee, when he was speaking, and Lee said "one of his brethren had said no man of common sense would speak as he did, and he supposed he was a man of uncommon sense." "Yes," said Asbury, "yes, yes, brother Lee, you are a man of uncommon sense." "Then," said Lee, "I beg that uncommon attention be paid to what I am about to say."

Once Asbury said petulantly that he would not give one single preacher for three married ones. "I ask a location, sir," said one; "And so do I," said another; "And so do I," said another of the married men. "Why, brethren, what do you mean?" said the alarmed bishop. "Why, sir, you said you had rather have one single preacher than three of us." "Did I say that?" "Yes, sir, you did." "Then I'll take it back; I'll take it back."

He did not like opposition, nor any movement that lessened his episcopal power, and when the men of

Digitized by Microsoft®

the presbyterial party, as he called it, persisted in their effort to make the presiding eldership electoral, he avowed his determination to use his position to prevent it, as far as possible, saying to T. L. Douglas in a letter quoted by Bennett (Memorials, p. 584): "In former times I have been impartial, indifferent, and have appointed good men, that I knew were for a presbyterial party; but since they have made such an unwarrantable attack upon the constitution, in the very first General Conference after its adoption, I will only trust such men as far as I can see them, and let such men know that I know their principles and disapprove them."

He was sternly opposed to innovations, and as he grew older was always on the alert lest there should be any made. Young Nathan Bangs had been sent to New York as one of the preachers. He found a state of things which he thought ought to be corrected. There was a wild excitement in the meetings, which was very offensive to the young preacher, and at considerable cost to himself he sternly suppressed these excesses. It was reported to Asbury that he was making a concession to the demands of the fastidious, and the old bishop mildly alluded to it in a letter to the young pastor. Bangs asked for an explanation, but showed that he was hurt. The dear old man replied, saying among other things: "I am sorry I am not more prudent, but when I am called upon so often to speak and write I am not sufficiently on my guard. I hope you will bear with me. You will pardon me, and pray that I may say, do, preach, and write better."

He had no children of his own, and he looked on

Digitized by Microsoft®

the young preachers as his family. He was as gentle and tender toward them as a grandfather could have been toward the members of a son's household. He was in the habit of tenderly embracing them, and kissed them affectionately on the cheek. He called them by the most endearing names—but he allowed none to oppose him. He was sure he was right, and if any opposed him they were to be resisted and sternly stood against. He made no compromises, no concessions, and was not always just in his censures.

While these features of his character must be recognized, one has not to search far before he finds that there was no malevolence in the good man's heart. He had never come in contact with a strong man without a contest, but it was the brave tilt of a stainless knight, and always in defense of what he believed to be the right. He was as devoid of selfishness as he was of fear, and as ready to forgive as he was quick to strike; and while his course was unswerving in the prosecution of duty, personal rancor had no place in his heart. Rankin, Wesley, Coke, Lee, O'Kelly, had all found him a sturdy antagonist, but he always contended for a principle. He called no man rabbi, and he asked from others nothing more than he gave.

No man ever did so much for Methodism in America as Francis Asbury, and no man ever had an eye more single to God's glory in the work he did, and no man ever labored more unselfishly for those among whom his lot was cast.

THE END.

Digitized by Microsoft®

HS.

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®

SEP 6- 1928

Digitized by Microsoft®